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New light on the Inner Light:
An assessment of how Rufus Jones attempted to synthesize
Quakerism and modern thought in *Social Law in the Spiritual
World*

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Abstract

Concerned by the threat that psychology seemed to pose to Christian belief, Rufus Jones wrote *Social Law in the Spiritual World* in 1904 to show how this new science would actually lead to a deeper understanding of God. In particular, Jones, an American Quaker, discussed the relationship between humans and God in terms of the Quaker concept of the Inner Light. He argued that the traditional dualistic formulation, which saw the Inner Light as distinct from human nature, was psychologically flawed and that instead it should be understood as describing an inherent relationship between God and humans.

Jones returned to the ideas in *Social Law* throughout his life, invariably generating controversy. Liberal Quakers endorsed his use of psychology, and his novel formulation of the Inner Light became axiomatic. Many Evangelical Quakers, however, worried that he was promoting humanism and marginalizing the need for Christ. He has thus been feted for revitalizing Quakerism on the one hand while being accused of making this Quakerism Christless on the other. In spite of his enduring legacy, however, his key ideas have received little critical attention.

This thesis identifies the multiple strands of thought that are apparent in *Social Law*, assesses Jones' attempts to synthesize them, and explains why his ideas have met with such varied reactions. I conclude that Jones' new formulation of the Inner Light draws on the idealism of Josiah Royce, the psychology of William James and the social imperative of the Social Gospel movement. Furthermore, I propose five reasons why Jones' synthesis provoked criticism. First, although Jones self-identified as a Christian, his theism draws on the 'Absolute' of Royce and the 'more' of James so is actually multivalent. Second, he used psychology to argue that humans and God were related through the subconscious, a strategy that carried with it an implicit universalism. Third, Jones had an experiential approach to Christian doctrine, which meant that his formulation of the Inner Light explained his own experience of God, but not that of someone who had no sense of God's presence. Fourth, his deliberate avoidance of theological concepts meant that he did not have the theological tools to address the points at which he diverged from traditional Christian doctrine, for example concerning how the Creator and creation could be distinct. Finally, his informal prose meant that he was particularly vulnerable to being quoted out of context and therefore of being misinterpreted.

My thesis starts with Jones' accounts of his childhood experiences of God and a brief overview of the relevant aspects of the thought of James and Royce. I then analyse how he wove this thought together with Christian ideas about God, Christ and human nature, and with Quaker ideas about the Inner Light and mysticism. Finally, I assess the wide range of reactions to his ideas that are apparent both in unpublished archival letters and in the secondary literature.

It is hoped that this critical evaluation of an important Quaker thinker, who is little known outside Quakerism, will be of use both to those interested in the historical interaction between Christianity and psychology and to those seeking to understand the origins of today's 'post-Christian' Quakerism.

Lay summary

In the early 20th century, many Christians were concerned about the questions that the new science of psychology was asking about the nature of the soul and religious experience. The American Quaker Rufus Jones, however, was convinced that psychology, far from being a threat to Christian belief, would provide new insights into the nature of God and the relationship between God and humans. His 1904 book, *Social Law in the Spiritual World*, was an attempt to share this conviction with the general public. The book focused on what Quakers refer to as the Inner Light, or 'that of God in everyone'. Whereas Quakers had traditionally understood the Inner Light as a divine spark implanted in humans (like a divine candle in a human lantern), Jones insisted that this view did not fit with the new discoveries of psychology. Instead, the Inner Light was both human and divine.

Jones returned to the ideas in *Social Law* again and again throughout his life, invariably generating controversy. While some Quakers endorsed his use of psychology and his ideas about the Inner Light, others worried that he had too optimistic a view of human nature and that Jesus was no longer needed to reconcile humans and God. Thus, although Jones has been called one of the most influential Quakers in the history of the movement, not everyone approves of his legacy.

In spite of his influence, Jones' ideas have not been critically assessed. My thesis identifies the multiple strands of thought that are apparent in *Social Law*, assesses Jones' attempts to weave them together, and explains why his ideas have met with such varied reactions. I conclude that Jones draws on the Harvard philosopher Josiah Royce, who argued that God is the ultimate consciousness, and on the Harvard psychologist William James, who believed that humans are related to a 'more' through the subconscious. I propose that the ideas in *Social Law* provoked criticism partly because Royce's and James' ideas differed from traditional Christian ideas about God, and partly because Jones' informal style meant that he was often misinterpreted.

I start by considering Jones' accounts of his childhood experiences of God and giving a brief overview of the relevant aspects of the thought of James and Royce. I then analyse how he wove this thought together with Christian ideas about God, Christ and human nature, and with Quaker ideas about the Inner Light and mysticism. Finally, I assess the wide range of reactions to his ideas that are apparent both in archival letters and in published comments on his work.

It is hoped that this critical evaluation of an important Quaker thinker, who is little known outside Quakerism, will be of use both to those interested in the historical interaction between Christianity and psychology and to those seeking to understand why British Quakerism has shifted from a Christian movement to one that welcomes people with a diverse range of beliefs.

*For my parents,
Sandra and Morley Forrester,
with gratitude for over half a century of unwavering support*

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Rufus Jones recognized that the spiritual life involved individual effort in the context of a supportive community, and the same could be said for the academic life. In this respect, I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Dr Mark Harris, who managed to tread the fine line between offering suggestions, encouragement and constructive criticism on the one hand and letting me own this project on the other. My secondary supervisor, Dr Steven Sutcliffe, offered helpful feedback on early drafts of material relating to mysticism and psychology.

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Rufus Jones and his era were brought to life for me by the archival letters in Haverford College library. I am grateful to the librarian, Sarah Horowitz, who retrieved letters from what I imagined to be dusty shoeboxes, scanned them, and sent them through the ether to Peebles.

Family and friends also had a role to play, particularly as I studied from home in Peebles rather than in Edinburgh. I thank my husband Martin for emotional (and financial!) support, and my two sons, Calum and Andrew, for their forbearance. Calum was a source of empathy for the highs and lows of academic study, and Andrew's gentle teasing always made me smile and stopped me taking myself too seriously. Friends supported and encouraged me in my return to university, and have patiently and politely listened to me enthuse about early 20th century Quakerism. Finally, my gratitude goes to the small community of Tweeddale Quakers, who offered a warm welcome when I turned up at the beginning of my studies knowing virtually nothing about Quakerism. Many of them are physically frail, but they are spiritually robust, and I have found their curiosity about and engagement with life inspiring.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signature

Date

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It is manifestly impossible to crowd our religious dogmas and our sacred traditions into some compartment impervious to thought or to have them unaffected by the present day studies on the nature of the inner life.¹

‘There are few crises’, observed Rufus Jones in *Social Law in the Spiritual World*, ‘to compare with that which appears when the simple, childhood religion, imbibed at mother’s knee and absorbed from early home and church environment, comes into collision with a scientific, solidly reasoned system which explains the universe.’² Jones’ own childhood religion was Quakerism, characterized by daily times of family silence on a farm in rural Maine, by twice-weekly, two-hour, largely silent meetings for worship, and by an unshakeable conviction that God dwelt within and directly guided him and his fellow Quakers.³ It was a religion rooted in Christianity and brought to life by its emphasis on a felt experience of God that Jones later described as mystical. The scientific, solidly reasoned system that he was reminiscing about was Darwin’s theory of evolution. At the time of *Social Law*, however, it was the discoveries and theories arising from the new science of psychology that were causing consternation. Would this new science explain away the soul, religious experience, free will, and even God, as some were suggesting? Jones assured his

¹ R. M. Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World* (London: Headley Brothers, 1904), 14.

² Jones, *Social Law*, 9–10.

³ I have used the common terms ‘Quakerism’ and Quakers to refer to the Religious Society of Friends and its members throughout. See Section 1.1.1.

readers that it would not, and sought to convert the potential crisis into an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of God.

Social Law in the Spiritual World was Jones' first attempt to grasp this opportunity, but his success in averting a crisis was ambiguous if judged by the diverse interpretations of and reactions to the book. In spite of his aim of defending Christianity, for example, Jones has often been accused of ushering in a Christless form of Quakerism.⁴ The book's audacious central tenet, that God is an inherent part of human nature, was initially ignored, subsequently became axiomatic for Liberal Quakers, but has regularly been criticized by Evangelical Quakers.⁵ And, although the historian of religion Michael Hedstrom described the book as a ground-breaking publication that made mysticism middlebrow, an elderly Jones deemed it a work of his youth 'with some crude things in it'.⁶

The diversity apparent in these reactions had its genesis in the theological, philosophical, religious and scientific upheavals that were either unsettling or inspiring many Christians at the beginning of the 20th century. For Jones, the ideas that were particularly significant were those he encountered at Harvard University, where he undertook a year of postgraduate study in 1900/01. In theology, higher criticism and the increasing authority awarded to science were challenging traditional biblical interpretations and demarcating fracture lines between Liberal and Evangelical Christians. In philosophy, the Harvard idealist Josiah Royce was attempting to show how individuals were related to ultimate consciousness, or the 'Absolute'. In religion, mysticism was proving an irresistible attraction for many while raising fundamental questions about religious experience, and Francis

⁴ G. Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism? Rufus Jones and the person and work of Christ', *Quaker Religious Thought*, 116 (2011): 37–53

⁵ For references see my Chapter 9.

⁶ See M. S. Hedstrom, 'Rufus Jones and mysticism for the masses', *Cross Currents*, 54 (2003): 31–44 and the Introduction in M.S. Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2013). Jones' opinion on *Social Law* is from a letter to Ernest Hocking, 13 June 1937, Haverford College Rufus Jones Special Collection (hereafter HC), Box 58.

Peabody, the Harvard proponent of the Social Gospel movement, was stressing the importance of social reform. And in psychology, William James, again of Harvard, had published his seminal work *Principles of Psychology* in 1890, and twelve years later was proposing in *Varieties of Religious Experience* that all individuals were related to a 'more' through the subconscious.⁷ All these developments characterized what Jones termed the 'modern world'.⁸ *Social Law* acknowledges both James and Royce in the Introduction,⁹ and can, I will propose, be seen as an attempted synthesis of their ideas with various aspects of Christianity and Quakerism.

The book's content therefore makes it an interesting subject of study in and of itself, covering as it does an often-neglected but vibrant expression of Christianity and its historical relationship to developments in idealism and psychology. Beyond this, though, the significance of the book lies in the effect it had on Quakerism. The human–divine relationship that is the central theme of *Social Law* is cast in terms of the 'Inner Light', a concept that lies at the heart of Quakerism. Jones argued that the traditional, dualistic understanding of the Inner Light, as something Divine implanted in human nature, was psychologically flawed. Rather, the Inner Light was both human and divine. In essence, the main objections to this idea, which have occurred in various guises throughout the last century, have been that it divinized humans, promoted humanism, underestimated sin and marginalized the need for Christ. These objections were raised more stridently in America, where evangelicalism exerted a stronger influence on Quakerism, than in Britain (see Section 1.1). Today, British Quakers hold a wide range of beliefs, both theistic and non-theistic. Although this pluralism has been fostered by many factors, both

⁷ W. James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Vols 1 and 2) (Digireads, [1890] 2010); W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Penguin, [1902] 1985), 511.

⁸ See, for example, Jones, *Social Law*, 171.

⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 21.

theological and cultural,¹⁰ it is, I will suggest, a natural corollary of the non-dualistic, psychologically informed formulation of the Inner Light in *Social Law*.

In view of the importance of its ideas, it is perhaps surprising that the book has not been studied in more detail, an omission recently noted by Michael Hedstrom, who declared *Social Law* to be 'an important and understudied book'.¹¹ Within Quakerism and the Quaker scholarly community, where Jones' impact is most apparent, one reason for this neglect may be the traditional wariness that Quakers exhibit towards theology.¹² Thus, although the importance of Jones' concept of the Inner Light is often acknowledged, there has been scant assessment of whether his arguments are robust, of how his ideas were influenced by psychology, and of the overall coherence of his thought. Outside Quakerism, it is notable that a number of scholars who were questioned in the late 1950s about Jones, by PhD candidate James Moore, viewed him as an engaging writer who spoke from deep experience but who did not have a particularly distinctive position. John Baillie of New College, Edinburgh, for example, saw Jones as a mystic but theologically merely as a representative member of the liberal movement of the early 20th century.¹³ While in one sense Baillie is correct, I suggest that the intervening years may have opened up a new angle on Jones' contribution, namely the way he combined science and religion. The academic study of the relationship between science and religion did not emerge until the mid-1960s, as exemplified by Ian Barbour's seminal work *Issues in Science and Religion*,¹⁴ so it is unlikely that Baillie and his fellow interviewees would have identified this aspect of Jones' thought, especially if they had not read *Social Law*. It is Jones' handling of this relationship, however, in which

¹⁰ For example the emphasis on intellectual tolerance - see M. Davie, *British Quaker Theology since 1895* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1997), 268.

¹¹ M. Hedstrom, 'The Quakerization of everything', *Quaker Religious Thought*, 122 (2014): 38.

¹² See e.g. J. Dudiak & L. Rediehs, 'Quakers, philosophy and truth', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 507–519.

¹³ J. F. Moore, 'The ethical thought of Rufus Matthew Jones, with special references to Biblical influences' (*PhD thesis*, Boston University, 1960), 297–323.

¹⁴ I. Barbour, *I. Issues in Science and Religion* (London: SCM, 1966).

we see Scripture, experience and psychology jostling for authority, that makes *Social Law* intriguing and that is partly responsible for its novel representation of the Inner Light. Furthermore, this relationship is of particular interest from a historical perspective because psychology was not an established edifice but a young discipline seeking to resolve tensions between the scientific respectability afforded by the laboratory and its early dalliance with psychic phenomena.

My aim in this thesis is thus to explore how Jones tried to synthesize Quakerism with ‘modern thought’, especially with regard to his views on the Inner Light and mysticism, to discover why and how he diverged from the Quaker tradition and the core of Christian conviction (terms I discuss in Section 1.2.1), and to determine whether both his detractors and his supporters have interpreted him correctly. I do this by undertaking a close reading of *Social Law* in historical context and by referring both to archival letters to and from Jones and to published reactions to the book. This enables me to identify the ideas of James and Royce buried in the text, to determine how Jones engaged with these ideas, and to assess whether Jones’ early readers and later commentators present an accurate picture of his thought.

Note that my aim is narrower than that of the other significant work in this area, Martin Davie’s *British Quaker Theology since 1895*, published in 1997. Davie traces the development of British Liberal Quakerism from the seminal Manchester Conference of 1895 to 1980.¹⁵ He offers a broad perspective, drawing on the thought of many Quakers over nearly a century, whereas my work is focused on a particular book, looking in detail at the ideas therein and at the varied reactions of lay readers and academics.

¹⁵ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*.

I start by describing Jones' Quaker practice and beliefs (Chapter 2) and providing a brief summary of the thought of James and Royce (Chapter 3). I then look at how Jones blended his Quaker beliefs with ideas from James and Royce in regard to God (Chapter 4), human nature (Chapter 5) and Christ (Chapter 6). Having gained some insight into Jones' views in these key areas, I move on to discuss how they found expression in his reformulation of the human–divine relationship, or the Inner Light (Chapter 7), and how this concept found practical expression in his interpretation of mysticism (Chapter 8). Finally, I discuss whether both advocates and critics of Jones have interpreted him accurately (Chapter 9).

I conclude that Jones' understanding of mysticism as first set out in *Social Law* is his grand synthesis of pertinent aspects of Quakerism, modern thought and Christian liberal theology. It encompasses the Quaker emphasis on an experiential relationship with God, the Inner Light and the importance of social action, ideas from Royce's idealism and James' psychology, and the social imperative of the Social Gospel movement. I further suggest that although Jones hoped that his use of modern thought would make Christianity and Quakerism credible, he ended up with a theory of the Inner Light (and therefore a form of Quakerism) that was not, in fact, unequivocally Christian.

I identify five reasons for this ambiguity and incipient Quaker pluralism.

(1) The loving Father of Christianity is not straightforwardly identical to the 'more' of James or the 'Absolute' of Royce. Jones treated them as if they were equivalent, but the fact that they are not and that he used ideas about the 'more' and 'Absolute' in relation to the Inner Light means that his formulation of this fundamental Quaker concept holds equally well outside a Christian framework. I term this factor his *multivalent theism*.

(2) Jones' determination to make Christianity consistent with psychology meant that he proposed that humans and God were inherently related through the

subconscious. One consequence of this was that the need for and the uniqueness of Christ were brought into question. I term this factor his *reliance on psychology*.

(3) Jones, in keeping with the Quaker tradition, had an experiential approach to Christianity, and this means that at times what he seems to be defending is not so much Christian doctrine as his own experience of God. He had a strong sense of God's presence and love, for example, and an (arguably) concomitant neglect of doctrines related to a separation from God, for example regarding sin and the atonement. I term this factor his *experiential basis*.

(4) Jones' deliberate avoidance of theological concepts meant that he did not have the tools to address important theological issues, in particular those related to the differentiation between humans, Christ and God. This means, for example, that he can be interpreted as divinizing human nature. I term this factor his *theological naivety*.

(5) Finally, the fact that Jones was attempting to synthesize complex ideas and present them simply for lay people meant that he was vulnerable to being misinterpreted. I term this factor his *informal style*.

My hope is that this thesis will make a contribution in two areas of research. The first is the history of Liberal Quakerism. Jones' thought has had a profound influence on the development of this strand of Quakerism, which is more dominant in Britain than in America, so a critical analysis of his ideas may cast light on some of the issues being discussed regarding the diversity of belief among today's British 'post-Christian' Quakers.¹⁶ The second is the historical dialogue between psychology and Christianity. Jones was attempting to defend aspects of Christian belief and practice using psychology at a particularly interesting time for this emerging discipline. While some psychologists (notably James) were exploring psychic phenomena and were not averse to metaphysical speculation, others were exhibiting what has been termed 'physics envy' and were attempting to present

¹⁶ See, for example, H. Rowlands (ed.) *God, Words and Us* (London: Quaker Books, 2017).

psychology as a science and thereby gain kudos and authority. Jones, interestingly, drew from both sides of the divide, combining James' metaphysical speculation with general appeals to the authority of 'psychology' or 'science'.

In the remainder of this chapter I first provide a brief introduction to Quakerism, a short biography of Rufus Jones and an overview of *Social Law*. I then describe my methodology, detail some critical considerations, and provide a short literature review. Finally, I give a chapter-by-chapter outline of the thesis.

1.1 An introduction to Quakerism, Rufus Jones and *Social Law*

The Quaker environment into which Jones was born undoubtedly determined his life's trajectory, so I start by commenting on some of the historical factors that shaped that environment. I then outline how Jones in turn influenced Quakerism.

1.1.1 Quakerism circa 1900

The movement now known officially as the Religious Society of Friends was established by George Fox during the turmoil of the English civil wars.¹⁷ Further information is provided throughout the thesis, but for now I note merely that the movement's most distinctive feature was the belief that all people could hear and know God by virtue of having 'that of God' within them, with this point of contact often referred to as the Inward or Inner Light and being associated with Christ.

¹⁷ Members initially referred to themselves as 'Friends of Truth' or 'Children of the Light', with the term Religious Society of Friends coming into use in the early 19th century (P. Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 29). There are various theories for the origin of the term Quakerism. One is Fox's claim that the term was first used by Justice Bennett of Derby when Fox told him to 'tremble at the word of God' during his trial for blasphemy (J. Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1984), 51), but another is that the members of this fledgling movement quaked under the emotional strain of trying to discern whether or not to offer vocal ministry. For an account of a manifestation of quaking as late as the 1960s, see *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 4th edn (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, 1995), 2.58.

Meetings were characterized by a communal silence in which anyone who felt that God was speaking to them could share their message, by offering 'vocal ministry'.

The possibility of hearing God directly raised questions about the relative authority of Scripture and the Inner Light, and the different answers given lie behind most of the historical schisms within Quakerism (see Chapter 7 and Appendix A). Jones grew up in a so-called 'Gurneyite' community, named after Joseph John Gurney (1788–1847), an Oxford-educated, wealthy English banker who had visited North America between 1837 and 1840 to great acclaim.¹⁸ Gurney emphasized the importance of the Bible, studying it in its original languages and working with William Wilberforce under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society.¹⁹ Gurneyite Quakers thus tended to attribute authority to Scripture, a position that their detractors claimed broke faith with the traditional Quaker attribution of authority to the Inner Light.²⁰

By the 1860s, two strands were becoming apparent within Gurneyite Quakerism. The differences between them are best illustrated by reference to two very different books published in the late 1890s by two Gurneyite Quakers.²¹ The first, written by Richard H. Thomas, was the novel *Penelpe* about members of a Quaker community in rural Pennsylvania. These Quakers had abandoned plain dress but avoided being slaves to fashion, read the Bible but did not fear critical study, and worshipped in silence but were active in peace, temperance and other reform causes. They were confident that their lives were part of God's plan to establish his kingdom on earth. The second, written by Seth G. Rees, was *The Ideal Pentecostal Church*. The ideal church encouraged 'holy ghost revivals', conviction and

¹⁸ Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 197.

¹⁹ H. R. Macy, 'Quakers and Scripture', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 193.

²⁰ See e.g. L. L. Wilson, 'Conservative Friends, 1845–2010' in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 126–140.

²¹ T. D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 144.

conversion, but eschewed evolution, higher criticism and social reform. Its sole purpose was to save sinners before the imminent return of Christ. The two streams encapsulated by these books became known respectively as the *renewal/modernist* movement, which was world-accepting and believed that humanity would prepare the rule of the saints, and the *revival/holiness* movement, which believed that it was Christ who would initiate this rule.²²

As we will see in Chapter 2, Jones' upbringing undoubtedly prepared him for his eventual alignment with the renewal/modernist movement. And this in turn made him sympathetic to the British 'modernist/liberal' movement that came to prominence at the Manchester Conference of 1895 (see Section 1.2.1). The story starts, though, on a farm in rural Maine.

1.1.2 Rufus Jones: *The man, his life and his legacy*

Jones was born in 1863 into a Quaker community in South China, where family daily Bible readings and times of silence formed the backdrop of a physically demanding farming life.²³ After attending Quaker schools, he enrolled at Haverford College, a small but respected Quaker institution of higher education just outside Philadelphia, where he studied history, philosophy and religion. Following graduation, he spent a year travelling in Europe, and on his return to America in 1887 spent the next six years teaching at Quaker schools. In 1893 he returned to Haverford, where he taught psychology, philosophy and Christian history for the rest of his career, remaining a prominent figure on campus well after his retirement. He loved the job, reflecting that 'I have always felt that I was at my best in a classroom, and there is no question that I am happiest when I am teaching a class of youth.'²⁴ 1893 also saw him taking on editorship of the liberal Quaker journal *The Friends Review*, which he

²² For a further discussion and summary of differences, see P. Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 30.

²³ The following biographical information is taken mainly from E. Vining, *Friend of Life: The Biography of Rufus M. Jones* (Forgotten Books, [1958] 2012).

²⁴ R.M. Jones, *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years* (New York: MacMillan, 1934), 211.

merged in the following year with the evangelical *The Christian Worker* to form *The American Friend*, partly in an attempt to promote unity between these two strands of Quakerism.²⁵ His attempts to create unity also involved travelling across America (10,000 miles a year), a physical challenge made that much more difficult because Jones' undiagnosed allergy to horses meant that journeys from train stations by horse and cart often left him breathless to the extent that he recalled that 'it often seemed as though each breath would be the last one I could draw'.²⁶ He was also much in demand as a speaker world-wide and was a prolific writer, averaging about a book a year for 50 years in addition to churning out numerous articles and editorials.²⁷ As Walters notes, it was 'a regimen that would have killed a different man'.²⁸

After America joined the First World War in 1917, Jones was instrumental in setting up the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), an organization that he chaired on and off until 1944 and that in 1947 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the British Friends Service Council for relief work in connection with the two World Wars. Just prior to retirement, he was also involved in the layman's foreign mission, travelling widely in Asia, and, controversially, advocating learning from other religions.²⁹ Still active in his mid-70s, in 1938 he led a delegation of Quakers to Germany to plead the cause of the Jews to the Gestapo. He died in 1948, in bed convalescing after a series of heart attacks. True to form, he had spent the morning working – correcting the proofs for his latest book and finishing a speech he was

²⁵ For a fuller discussion of the factors behind the merger, see D. Alten, 'Rufus Jones and the American Friend: A quest for unity', *Quaker History* 74 (1985): 41–48

²⁶ Jones, *Middle Years*, 174.

²⁷ Jones was invited to speak at over 100 institutions of higher education, ranging from Oxford and Cambridge to the University of Shanghai, and maintained a 25-year association with Harvard, as detailed in D. Hinshaw, *Rufus Jones, Master Quaker* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1951), 264–266. For Jones's publications, see C. Bernet, *Rufus Jones (1863–1948)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009).

²⁸ K. Walters, *Rufus Jones Essential Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 22.

²⁹ See S. W. Angell, 'Rufus Jones and the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry: How a Quaker helped to shape modern ecumenical Christianity', *Quaker Theology* 3 (2000): 167–209.

due to deliver a few days later.³⁰ A timeline of the main events in his life is given in Appendix B.

Jones' extraordinary productivity was accomplished against a background of ill health. At various points in his life he suffered from severe asthma, sore eyes, insomnia, rheumatism, back problems that made it difficult to stand, a 'defective' digestive system later associated with a collapsed intestine, and dental problems, exacerbated by a bad dentist, that seemed to cause secondary ailments (Jones once commented wryly that 'Satan has often had to bear the blame for deeply hidden pains and mysterious assaults which should have been charged up to the account of a blundering dentist.').³¹ He reflected, though, that these problems did not hinder him unduly: 'I cannot see, as I look back over the pain-charts, that these thorns in the flesh have hampered my work or limited my range in any serious degree.'³² In fact, he concluded that not to know 'the ministry of pain' would have resulted in a 'loss of capacity for genuine sympathy'.³³

Furthermore, the time at which he wrote *Social Law* was marked by a tragic succession of bereavements. Jones lost his first wife Sallie Coutant in 1899 to tuberculosis, his fiancée Ellen Wood in 1900 to typhoid, and his 11-year-old son Lowell in 1903 to diphtheria. (He later married Elizabeth Bartram Cadbury in 1902, and the couple had a daughter, Mary Hoxie, in 1904.) In 1905, his close friend and fellow reformer John Wilhelm Rowntree died shortly after arriving in America to see Jones. Just a year before, Jones had written a heartfelt dedication to Rowntree in *Social Law*, a 'Dear friend over the sea with whom I have had a new revelation of the riches of human fellowship and the still deeper joy of fellowship with our Divine Companion'. Here again, though, loss seemed to enrich rather than diminish Jones.

³⁰ Hinshaw, *Master Quaker*, 3.

³¹ Jones gives an account of some of his health issues in *Middle Years*, Chapter XI. The comment about dentists is on p. 175.

³² Jones, *Middle Years*, 178.

³³ Jones, *Middle Years*, 177.

Shortly after Lowell's death he could write that 'The greatest service of the loved object is that it trains and prepares us for wider, more universal love.'³⁴ Jones overcame physical and emotional personal challenges, then, and in fact saw them as opportunities for spiritual growth.

Personal reminiscences about Jones are unfailingly glowing, to the extent that it is difficult to gain a balanced picture of his character. His biographers describe him as having a gift for friendship with people from all walks in life and as having a seemingly endless supply of amusing anecdotes (many of them about Maine farmers).³⁵ He is generally acknowledged to have been a captivating speaker. The American pastor and radio-broadcaster Harry Emerson Fosdick recalled that Jones 'was natural, genuine, direct, human. He spoke from experience to experience. He possessed the spiritual vitality he pled for, and he shared it.'³⁶ He was also a natural leader, as evident from childhood when he led the local band of farmboys 'in an amazing list of things which to say the least were not saintly'.³⁷ In later life, his vision and ability to inspire others proved invaluable to the AFSC. Clarence Pickett, a colleague on the AFSC, wrote 'At first sometimes his proposals seemed incredible and impossible, but I have never known anyone who lived to see as large a proportion of his dreams fulfilled.'³⁸

At various points in his memoirs Jones describes his struggles to 'be good',³⁹ but in maturity there is a sense that, essentially, Rufus Jones liked Rufus Jones. He starts *Small Town Boy*, for example, by proclaiming that his early experiences made him the kind of person he was 'glad to be'.⁴⁰ And he was certainly not reticent about sharing his thoughts: a former student recalled that Jones offered vocal ministry so

³⁴ R.M. Jones, *Practical Christianity* (Memphis: General Books, [1905] 2012), 36.

³⁵ See e.g. Hinshaw, *Master Quaker*, 3–8; Vining, *Friend of Life*, 282.

³⁶ H. E. Fosdick (ed), *Rufus Jones Speaks to our Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), xii.

³⁷ R. M. Jones, *A Small-Town Boy* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 33.

³⁸ Hinshaw, *Master Quaker*, 5.

³⁹ See e.g. Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 104, 116, 122.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Small-Town Boy*, viii.

regularly that students used to run a sweepstake on the time he would first rise to speak.⁴¹ This self-confidence and self-esteem were, however, of the sort that encouraged rather than belittled others. One friend enthused that 'to meet him was to feel set up for the day because he always made one confident that the best was yet to come',⁴² and in a letter he encouraged his fiancée Elizabeth Bartram not to be hampered by humility, advising that she needed rather courage, confidence and heart-boldness.⁴³

The breadth of Jones' legacy reflects his multifaceted life. One could point to his contributions to the AFSC, and to his work in bridging the gaps between various strands in Quakerism, for example. He has also been held partly responsible for the Quaker acceptance of psychology: in 1943, the first Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology declared the positive interaction between Quakers and psychology to be the joint legacy of William James and Rufus Jones.⁴⁴ Beyond Quakerism, the historian of religion Leigh Schmidt discusses Jones in the wider context of American spirituality, enthusing that 'his highly spiritualized version of the Society of Friends (indeed, of Christianity across the board) was sweepingly influential. Almost single-handedly, he transformed his small denomination into a great purveyor of devotional wisdom for aspirants from various religious backgrounds.'⁴⁵ It is thus understandable that the Quaker scholar Wilmer Cooper should fete Jones as one of the most influential Quakers in the 350-year history of the movement.⁴⁶ The aspects

⁴¹ Stephen Cary, a former student of Jones, being interviewed in the DVD 'Rufus Jones: A Luminous Life' (Philadelphia: Share Vision Productions, 2008), at 19:34 mins.

⁴² Hinshaw, *Master Quaker*, 5.

⁴³ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 94

⁴⁴ M. Post Abbott, 'Transformation of the Light: Jungian thought and 20th century Friends', *Quaker History* 89 (2000): 49.

⁴⁵ L. E. Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 230. Schmidt is perhaps overstating the case, neglecting as he does the inspiration and contribution from English Quakers such as John Wilhelm Rowntree and Edward Grubb and failing to mention that Evangelical Quakers resisted some of Jones' ideas.

⁴⁶ W. Cooper, 'Reflections on Rufus M. Jones Quaker giant of the twentieth century', *Quaker History* 94 (2005): 25.

of his legacy that are of most interest in this thesis, however, concern his views on mysticism and the Inner Light.

Jones' fascination with mysticism had its roots in his childhood. Although he did not use the term at the time, he says of his upbringing that 'by far the most important factor was the unnamed and unconscious mystical propensity of my family'.⁴⁷ In later years, he would characterize mysticism as a felt but usually undramatic experience of God available to all (see Chapter 8). At college he began to interpret Quakerism as a mystical religion, and later developed a theory (now widely discredited) of its continuity with European mysticism.⁴⁸ Shortly after graduating, while considering his future career on a solitary Alpine walk, he had a religious experience in which he saw stretching before him 'an unfolding of labor in the realm of mystical religion'.⁴⁹ This labour resulted in several books specifically about the history of mysticism (see Section 1.2.2.3), although in fact mysticism runs like a thread through all his writing. It also meant that he is credited with being the founder of modern mystical Quakerism,⁵⁰ in the sense that mysticism was often an element of meetings that emerged where Jones was read or heard.⁵¹

As will become clear in Chapters 7 to 9, Jones' understanding of mysticism is inseparable from his view of the Inner Light. Reacting against dualistic formulations that saw the Inner Light as something 'foreign' injected into the soul, Jones argued that it was an inherent part of human nature. His view took hold to the extent that Davie suggested in 2004 that it had become axiomatic for Liberal Quakers.⁵² It was a view that provoked controversy regarding its implications for the traditional

⁴⁷ R. M. Jones, 'Why I enroll with the mystics', in *Contemporary American Theology* (Vol. 1), ed. V. Ferm (New York: Round Table Press, 1932), 191.

⁴⁸ For a refutation of Jones's view, see e.g. D. E. Bassuk, 'Rufus Jones and mysticism', *Quaker Religious Thought* 46 (1978): 4–23.

⁴⁹ R. M. Jones, *The Trail of Life in College* (New York: MacMillan, 1929), 160.

⁵⁰ See Cooper, 'Reflections'.

⁵¹ P. Appelbaum, 'Protestant mysticism: Pacifists and the "practice of the presence"', *Quaker History* 94 (2005): 1–24.

⁵² M. Davie, 'Reflections on an ecumenical pilgrimage', in *The Creation of Quaker Theory*, ed. P. Dandelion (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 194.

association of the Inner Light with Christ though. Carole Spencer's complaint is fairly typical, namely that 'Jones took Christ out of the Light, the soul itself was the Light, and the soul became divine.'⁵³ Many of Jones' ideas about the Inner Light and mysticism were aired for the first time in *Social Law*, to which we now turn.

1.1.3 *Social Law in the Spiritual World*

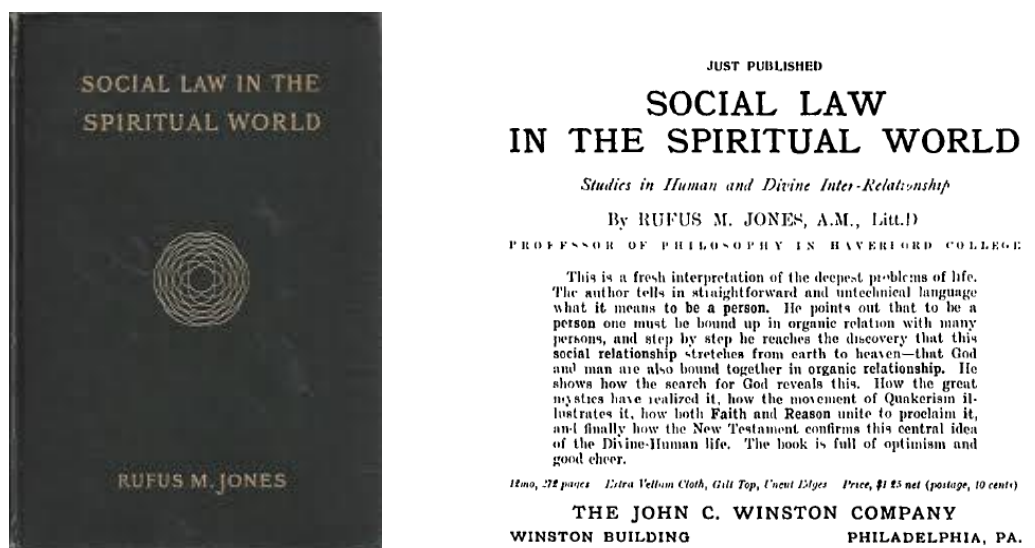


Figure 1.1 The front cover of *Social Law* (published by John Winston, Philadelphia, 1904) (left), and the publisher's advertisement (right). The diagram on the front cover represents Dante's vision of a rose, which, Jones explains by way of a summary of the entire book, is 'one consummate flower' in which the saints are petals and God is at the centre.⁵⁴

The subject matter of *Social Law* is spelled out clearly in the publisher's advert (Fig. 1.1).⁵⁵ The description hints at two related themes. The first is that human life can be understood only in the context of other people.⁵⁶ The second is that God and humans are related, an idea that Jones expounded with reference to the Inner

⁵³ C. D. Spencer, *Holiness: The Soul of Quakerism* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 204.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 272.

⁵⁵ *Friends' Intelligencer*, 61 (December 3 1904): 49

⁵⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 17.

Light. As noted, the evidence that Jones provided for these assertions would come largely from Royce's idealism and James' psychology.

As will be detailed in Chapter 9, the initial reaction to *Social Law* was mixed. Some reviews praised it; one said it touched important issues but awaited a 'competent' interpreter; and some of the Quakers in Philadelphia banned it from their library.⁵⁷ So far, so inauspicious. Fast forward half a century though, and Elizabeth Vining saw fit to devote an entire chapter to it in her biography of Jones, enthusiastically citing the eminent pastor and broadcaster Harry Emerson Fosdick as saying, 'That book opened the door to a new era in my thought and life.'⁵⁸ Fast forward another half century, and we find Matthew Hedstrom hailing the book as 'an influential first attempt to make the pragmatic openness of James's thought religiously relevant and accessible'.⁵⁹ In many ways, then, *Social Law* was ahead of its time.

As a final comment it is worth noting that, although in later years Jones would be praised for his 'careful and dignified writing' and a highly readable style that made him popular with the editors of the Religious Book Club, *Social Law* at times seems stilted, and the biblical tone of the last chapter, which was based on his Harvard dissertation, jars with the rest of the book.⁶⁰ Furthermore, being a writer of his time, Jones used the male personal pronoun. There is no trace of sexism in his writings, however, and in fact Quakers have been comfortable with female leadership from the movement's inception.

A chapter-by-chapter summary follows.

⁵⁷ For a summary of the reception, see Vining, *Friend of Life*, 108–110.

⁵⁸ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 110.

⁵⁹ Hedstrom, *Rise of Liberal Religion*, 3.

⁶⁰ The review of The Quakers in the American Colonies (*North American Review* 195 (February 1912): 675) says 'The name of Rufus M. Jones stands for the quality in writing most needed in American literature. It necessarily means thorough scholarship, careful and dignified writing, and permanent work'. Regarding the Religious Book Club, Hedstrom attributes Jones's popularity to his 'lively prose style replete with personal anecdotes and folksy yarns' (Hedstrom, *Rise of Liberal Religion*, 76).

1 Introduction

The book was written because psychology is threatening Christian belief by asking questions about the soul itself. Although many books are reinterpreting Christianity in the light of psychology, they are too technical for the average person. Hence, this one is written in a popular rather than a scientific style. The key idea in the book is that psychology has shown that humans are social beings. This discovery has profound religious significance, because this 'group' characteristic must also apply to God.

2 The Quest

God cannot be found by logic, because proofs of God's existence relying on first cause, design or the ontological argument are inadequate. Furthermore, God is not an object to be found like any other. Fortunately, we can find many realities such as love, sympathy and goodness that are not objects in space. We must therefore look for God in the spiritual realm, a realm that is reached through personality. Thus, the search for God must begin with questions about ourselves: Who am I? What do I live by? What does personality involve? How am I related to my fellows and to nature?

3 The Meaning of Personality

In order to acquire an adequate idea of God we must understand the meaning of personality. From the work of William James and James Baldwin, we can conclude (1) that personality involves a union in a social, spiritual whole; and (2) that the basis of the world we know lies in this fact of interrelated personalities.

4 The Realization of Persons

On one hand, personality is an achievement that involves following ideals. These ideals have their birth in society, through customs, art and religion, and imply the

existence of an infinite Self to whom we are related. On the other hand, nothing explains personality: from the first it 'trails clouds of glory'.

5 Self-sacrifice

At some point a child asserts his will and becomes a factor in his own making. But this is only half the story – self-sacrifice is also needed. The higher the person is on the scale of the spiritual life the more insistent the calls to self-sacrifice. The deepest note of the Gospel, namely that God suffers with us and for us, is also the deepest fact of all life. Social ethics has come upon this spiritual truth by scientific study.

6 The Subconscious Life

Consciousness arises out of the wider stream of the subconscious. In geniuses of any stripe, the wall between the subconscious and conscious life is thin. This suggests that there may be an inner portal to our personality, some real shekinah where we may meet with the Divine Companion.

7 The Testimony of Mysticism

Mystics find the heart of religion in their consciousness of God, and the mystic experience is possible to some degree for everyone. Jones defines two types of mystical attitude that are associated with this consciousness of God. Negation mystics seek an experience of God as an end in itself. They seek to transcend this world and live for a rare moment of ecstasy. Affirmation mystics, by contrast, seek an experience of God in order to know God's will and to gain strength to serve God in practical ways.

8 The Inner Light

In order to understand Quakerism, we need to understand the Inner Light. Early Quakers used the term Inner Light in three ways: (1) as a Divine Life resident in the soul; (2) as a source of guidance; (3) as a ground of spiritual certitude. How do these

views fare in the light of more adequate psychological knowledge? Point (2) is discussed in Jones' Chapter 9. Regarding (1), every analysis of personality discovers the fact that God and men are bound together. Quakers felt this, but did not always formulate the doctrine clearly. The early Quaker Robert Barclay saw the Inner Light as something injected into the soul, but this view was formulated under the influence of Descartes' dualistic philosophy and is based on an inadequate psychology because there is no basis for a unified personality. Rather, the Inner Light is the Divine Life personally apprehended in an individual soul. It is both human and Divine. Regarding (3), the belief that certitude comes from spiritual experience is in harmony with the modern perception that truth is found in consciousness, rather than in external authority.

9 The Test of Spiritual Guidance

All spiritual teachers have pointed out that the surest test of Divine guidance is to be sought in life-results. We must look not at the origin of an intimation for its justification but ask how it will further life and construct character. For ordinary men, this is difficult to judge, so a man must read his inward state in the light of the social spiritual group, a procedure found within Quakerism.

10 Faith as a Pathway to Reality

Faith is not holding onto an unverified opinion or accepting something on authority; rather, it is a way of dealing with reality. Faith grows as we act on what faith we have, and a transformed self appears. It is a spiritual process that produces a 'first-hand' religion.

11 The Self and the Over-self

To answer the question 'who am I?' is to undertake a cosmic task, because to be a self is to be united to a wider consciousness. Our very sense of finiteness implies the existence of the infinite. Furthermore, the self as knower cannot be severed from

the object known. Everything in the world is woven out of the thought-stuff of God. Thus, every instance of human consciousness opens into the total whole of reality.

12 The Divine–human life

The preceding chapters have dealt with the Divine and human inter-relationship but have not addressed sin and the need for redemption. Sin is the choice to prefer the isolated self. Redemption involves being drawn by Jesus, who is the supreme revelation of the Divine and human in one personality. The goal is a society in which God lives through men and men live in God.

1.2 Definitions, critical considerations and literature review

Social Law deals with complex themes in an informal style, which inevitably creates some methodological challenges. Below I first flag some of the complexities involved in definitions in relation to Christianity and Quakerism. I then discuss my critical approach to *Social Law*. Finally, I provide a brief literature review.

1.2.1 Christianity and Quakerism: Some comments

As noted, Jones self-identified as a Quaker and a Christian but has been criticized for diverging from Christian (often evangelical) beliefs and from the Quaker tradition. Given that he was influential in Britain and that British Quakers began questioning whether Quakerism should be tied so strongly to Christianity in the 1950s, it seems important to attempt to address the three-way relationship between Jones' views, Quakerism and Christianity. Here I first comment on my approach to discussing this relationship in *Social Law*, and then on some definitions in relation to liberalism within Christianity and Quakerism.

1.2.1.1 *The relationship between Christianity and Quakerism in Social Law*

There are a number of difficulties involved in discussing the relationship between Christianity, Quakerism and Jones' views. First, Christianity is a nebulous term, in that although most Christians subscribe to a number of basic beliefs (for example the loving nature of God), there is disagreement about others (for example regarding interpretations of the atonement and the authority of Scripture). My approach here is to use the terminology the 'core of conviction' to refer to a number of doctrines that I take to be central to Christianity and of particular interest in this thesis, namely that (i) God is characterized by love, (ii) God is triune, (iii) God created humans, and (iv) there is a distinction between God and creation.⁶¹

Second, Quakerism in Jones' time encompassed a broad range of beliefs, from the evangelical views that were particularly apparent in America to the more liberal views of Jones and his fellow reformers that were particularly apparent in Britain. My focus here is on Jones' divergence from evangelical Quaker beliefs, particularly regarding points raised in letters to Jones from his concerned evangelical readers. A useful reference document here is the evangelical statement of belief recorded in the Richmond Declaration of Faith, which was drawn up at a conference of 99 mostly American delegates in Richmond, Indiana in 1887.⁶² It was accepted by all but two American yearly meetings, but, notably, not by London Yearly Meeting.⁶³ Jones would later describe it as a poor representation of a vital Quaker faith that showed no recognition of the challenges raised by science.⁶⁴

Third, Quakers have since their earliest days been challenged regarding their Christian credentials, so the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity has

⁶¹ I have borrowed this terminology from Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 6–8. Davie, however, is not specific about what particular beliefs he had in mind.

⁶² The text is available at <http://www.quakerinfo.com/rdf.shtml>.

⁶³ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 57. Yearly Meeting refers to an independent body of Friends who belong to local meetings but meet, as the name suggests, once a year.

⁶⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 81.

never been straightforward.⁶⁵ My approach to this difficulty is to focus on how Quakerism sees itself in relation to Christianity, rather than trying to ascertain the similarity or divergence of two wide-ranging sets of beliefs. As noted, Quaker views on this relationship have changed dramatically since Jones' time: Jones and other liberal Quakers were often accused of not conforming to Christian belief, but they themselves self-identified as Christians; today, however, a significant proportion of British Quakers self-identify as adherents of religions other than Christianity or even as 'non-theists'.⁶⁶ My interest is in how Jones' formulation of the Inner Light could be interpreted as being consistent with Christianity by him while at the same time arguably leading to (or at least being consistent with) a form of Quakerism that came to see itself as including but not restricted to Christian belief. I refer to this latter self-understanding of Quakerism as pluralistic.

Finally, Jones' views in relation to both Quakerism and Christianity are often difficult to pin down because he was seeking to replace what he felt to be outdated theological language: as he put it in a 1906 book that had a similar style to *Social Law*, 'if I have used theological words I have endeavored to revitalize them'.⁶⁷ My approach here is to try to ascertain whether he was disagreeing with statements at a fundamental level or seeking to express the truth they contained using different terminology.

1.2.1.2 Liberal Christianity and liberal/modernist Quakerism

Christian liberal theology and the Quaker movement often referred to with the dual ascription 'liberal/modernist' (with which Jones is closely associated) are related,

⁶⁵ See e.g. R. Moore, 'Seventeenth-century context and Quaker beginnings', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 22.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Rowlands (ed.), *God, Words and Us*.

⁶⁷ R. M. Jones, *The Double Search: Studies in Atonement and Prayer* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1906), 13.

but again nebulous, terms.⁶⁸ My modest aim here is to offer some comments on them in relation to *Social Law*.

Christian liberal theology is difficult to define partly because, as Gary Dorrien points out, it is the child of two heritages – an Enlightenment-modernist heritage that upheld the authority of modern knowledge, and an evangelical heritage that upheld the divinity of Christ.⁶⁹ A particularly important aspect of it for this thesis is its emphasis on experience, as exemplified by Schleiermacher’s ‘feeling of absolute dependence’. Beyond this, its defining features vary according to the historiographical stance of individual interpreters.⁷⁰ We could, for example, start with William Hutchison’s 1976 benchmark study *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, which stressed the adaptation of Christian thought to modern cultural developments, especially in the sciences and social sciences, and the general optimistic attitude as expressed in the belief of the gradual establishment of the Kingdom of God. Jones can certainly be identified with these markers, for example in his reinterpretation of Genesis in the light of Darwin (see Chapter 2). Or we could start with Dorrien’s *The Making of American Liberal Theology*, which discusses the major Protestant liberal thinkers – including Jones – and situates them within the Protestant academic establishment. Again, this approach offers a cogent explanation for the origin of some of Jones’ ideas; for example, many aspects of his treatment of God and human nature echo the personalism associated with the Boston philosopher Borden Parker Bowne (see Chapter 4). Or we could start with what Schmidt terms the ‘expansive and often subversive cultural movement’ associated with Protestant liberalism. The volume *American Religious Liberalism*,

⁶⁸ See, for example, Dandelion, *A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 4.

⁶⁹ G. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism & Modernity 1900–1950* (Louisville: WJKB, 2003), 10–20.

⁷⁰ L. E. Schmidt, ‘Introduction’, in *American Religious Liberalism*, eds L. E. Schmidt & S. M. Promey (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 1–14.

edited by Schmidt, for example, includes an article on reading poetry religiously.⁷¹

This wider conception of what constitutes liberalism finds expression in how Jones and his Haverford lecturers embraced the concept of the poet-prophet (see Chapter 2). Whichever way it is characterized, then, Jones was heavily influenced by liberal Christianity.

The defining feature of Quaker liberalism was an emphasis on a direct experience of God, or the Inner Light.⁷² Liberals also tended to be philosophical idealists, to read the Bible as an inspired but not inerrant work, and to embrace modernism, namely the conviction that faith should make use of the latest knowledge.⁷³ The modernist impulse is expressed clearly in *Social Law*, for example, in Jones' assertion that our view of God must necessarily be different from that of the New Testament writers: 'We cannot take over unchanged the gift they have to bestow. We must perforce live in our world, and our view of God must fit our entire system of thought.'⁷⁴

American Evangelical Quakerism, as exemplified by the Richmond Declaration, emphasized the role of Christ, interpreted the atonement in terms of Christ's blood, and attributed authority to Scripture. Some strands of Evangelical Quakerism also embraced modernism, however, and it was the modernist impulse apparent in parts of the Evangelical tradition that allowed Jones and others to move freely between this tradition and the newly instigated Liberal one.⁷⁵

The demarcation lines between Quakerism (both Liberal and Evangelical) and liberal Christianity are blurred, however, because of the similarities between Christian liberal theology and Quakerism. Thus, for example, William James observed in

⁷¹ M. Robertson, 'Reading poetry religiously: The Walt Whitman Fellowship', in *American Religious Liberalism*, eds L. E. Schmidt & S. M. Promey (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 17–38.

⁷² J. W. Frost, J.W. 'Modernist and liberal Quakers, 1887–2010', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion, (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 81.

⁷³ For a discussion of Quaker modernism and the holiness response, see Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism*, 146–171.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 32–33.

⁷⁵ P. Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 182.

Varieties that, 'So far as our Christian sects to-day are evolving into liberality, they are simply reverting in essence to the position which Fox and the early Quakers so long ago assumed.'⁷⁶ I suggest, though, that there are some important differences in the motivations that led to certain of the outward similarities that James possibly had in mind. First, consider the fact that both Quakerism and liberal Christianity emphasize experience. For liberal Christians, this was partly because other areas of authority such as the Bible had been discredited. For Quakers, this emphasis originated in the conviction that God spoke to individuals as surely now as when the Bible was written. Second, consider the liberal emphasis on social reform, which resonated with the traditional Quaker emphasis on good works. For Quakers, however, this emphasis was traditionally associated with the leading of the Inner Light or conscience rather than with the theologically inspired views of post-millennialism associated with the Social Gospel movement. Finally, the optimism of liberal Christianity chimed with the traditional Quaker confidence that humans had a 'seed of God' within. In other words, although they were natural allies, it is not the case that the Quakerism of the 1650s was a precursor to 20th century liberal Christianity.

1.2.2 Critical considerations

One might expect Jones' attempts to make modern thought consistent with Christianity to be heavy on theological terminology and conventions. But Jones' attitude to theology is not straightforward. As noted, Quakers are generally sceptical about the value of theology – the emphasis is on, as George Fox put it, knowing 'experimentally', and doctrines not backed up by this experiential knowledge are often derided as 'notions'.⁷⁷ This attitude pulses through Jones *The Church's Debt to Heretics*, which reveals Jones' knowledge of, but frustration with, theological concepts: 'It is somewhat difficult for a person who has a practical mind

⁷⁶ James, *Varieties*, 7.

⁷⁷ Dudiak & Rediehs 'Quakers, philosophy and truth', 515.

and who is eager to see the actual reign of God advanced to have any patience with the Arian battle, which seems to him a futile struggle over dim abstractions', he complains, for example.⁷⁸ Jones is consequently light on theological terminology and he never sets out his views systematically.

On the other hand, he recognized that ideas about God can affect how people live their everyday lives, observing, for example, that 'the idea that God and man are not so related that the whole man may be spiritualized is the false formulation of the Inner Light, and wherever it has prevailed confusion and weakness have gone with it'.⁷⁹ Furthermore, he wrote *Social Law* because of his conviction that a theology that fails to fit the current worldview can be a major hindrance to faith. What Jones seems to want to do is to provide enough theological analysis to inspire action and make faith vibrant and credible, but to avoid straying into the realm of abstract speculation.

This self-imposed limitation inevitably affects the way that *Social Law* should be critiqued. My approach is to focus on the evidence and arguments that Jones uses and on the internal coherence of his thought rather than on comparing him with the prominent theologians of the day. I do, however, draw attention to where theological concepts would have made a difference, in particular in places where Jones seems to be diverging from the core of conviction but neither notes nor addresses this divergence.

It is also the case that Jones' informal style means that, perhaps in deference to his intended audience, he is frustratingly sparing with his reference citations. He draws heavily on James, but the details of this dependence are apparent only because I have identified similar passages in *Social Law* and *Principles*. Identifying these 'twin' passages enables me to ascertain how Jones (re)interprets James. This approach is

⁷⁸ R. M. Jones, *The Church's Debt to Heretics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1924), 85.

⁷⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 175.

perhaps not ideal, because similarity is not as conclusive as a direct citation regarding dependence, but the nature of Jones' writings means that it is the only way to proceed. Jones' methodology is interesting in itself, though, as it illustrates one way in which authority was being attributed to 'science' or 'psychology' in a broad and vague sense that often lacked concrete detail.

Another consequence of his informal style is that Jones often expressed himself differently depending on his intended audience. I therefore endeavour to interpret Jones' thought as a whole rather than relying on quotations out of context, and point out where I think that commentators have misinterpreted Jones by failing to appreciate this characteristic of his writing.

1.2.3 Primary sources

My main primary source is *Social Law*, but I supplement this with some of Jones' other works. This enables me to expand and clarify his ideas, and to draw attention to the potential confusion arising from the different forms of expression that he uses at different times.

1.2.3.1 The two versions of Social Law

The HathiTrust has three scanned copies of *Social Law* online – two originating from Harvard University and one from Princeton University. I have identified two phrases where one of these copies diverges from the other two. Both phrases concern the Inner Light. The first occurs on page 174, where the first of the two versions originating from Harvard University has the text 'This view [of the Inner Light] is thoroughly unscriptural and contrary to all the known facts of psychology.'⁸⁰ The version from Princeton University, however, has 'This view is not founded on the testimony of experience, and it leads to difficulties which are hopeless of

⁸⁰ <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hnh64l;view=1up;seq=7>, accessed 11 November 2017.

solution.’⁸¹ The second phrase occurs on page 176, where first Harvard version has ‘It [the Inner Light] is neither human, nor Divine’, whereas the Princeton one has ‘It is both human and Divine’.

Both versions were published by John C. Winston (Philadelphia, Chicago, Toronto) with a copyright date of 1904. The second Harvard version listed by the HathiTrust and the hardcopy published by Headley Brothers in London are the same as the Princeton version. Because both pairs of text take up exactly the same amount of space, the surrounding text is unchanged.

A letter from T. Harvey Haines to Jones about the book in 1905 might shed some light on this difference. Haines wrote that ‘Thee says somewhere, I cannot find it, that the conjunct soul is neither God nor human. It is this, as I conceive thy meaning, because it is both human and divine in parts. If this were added, it would be much more useful to many.’⁸² Given that by ‘conjunct soul’ Haines presumably meant the Inner Light, it is possible that Jones sought to clarify the original version after receiving the letter, but in such a way that the typesetters could paste the correction onto the original without needing to reset large amounts of text. Although the changes are minor, Jones wrote to John Wilhelm Rowntree that pp. 174–175 were the cardinal pages of the book (see Appendix C), so they are significant. On the assumption that this theory is correct, I will refer to the first Harvard version as the ‘original’ version and to the Princeton version as the ‘revised’ version when citing these phrases.

1.2.3.2 Jones’ published corpus

Social Law was Jones’ seventh book (see Appendix B), but the first to set forth his philosophy as a whole. Later books expand on and clarify the themes in it, but his fundamental ideas do not change or develop to a significant extent. As he put it in

⁸¹ <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101066132844;view=1up;seq=7>, accessed 11 November 2017.

⁸² T. Harvey Haines, 6 January 1905, HC Box 9 (underlining as in the letter).

1932, 'I have been endeavoring through all my writings, from *Social Law in the Spiritual World* to my last book, *Pathways to the Reality of God*, to leave that abstract Infinite behind where it belongs and to pass over to an interpretation of God which brings "the two worlds" together into a single unity.'⁸³ Of the fifty-plus books that Jones wrote, a number are particularly pertinent to this thesis. For insights into his spiritual and intellectual development, the three autobiographical volumes – *Finding the Trail of Life*, *The Trail of Life in College* and *The Trail of Life in the Middle Years* – are particularly useful.⁸⁴ For clarifying his views on mysticism, the prefaces and introductory chapters in *New Studies in Mystical Religion* and *The Luminous Life* are informative, providing as they do an overview of his thought.⁸⁵ Various other works by Jones are referred to throughout the thesis, my aim being to balance breadth of coverage to clarify his thought with the depth of focus on *Social Law*.

I consulted some of Jones' books as original editions, some online at sites such as www.hathitrust.org and www.archive.org, and some in scanned and reprinted form (indicated by two dates in the references). These latter books tend to be of poor quality, often with paragraphs and footnotes in the wrong places.

1.2.4 Secondary sources

Secondary material can be broadly classified into three main categories: biographical material, archival letters and critical assessments.

1.2.4.1 Biographical material

My main source for biographical information on Jones is Elizabeth Vining's *Friend of Life*, published in 1958.⁸⁶ The book is comprehensive, well researched, and sensitive

⁸³ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 211.

⁸⁴ Jones *Finding the Trail*; R. M. Jones, *The Trail of Life in College* (New York: Macmillan, 1929); Jones, *Middle Years*.

⁸⁵ R. M. Jones, *New Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1927); R. M. Jones, *The Luminous Trail* (New York, Macmillan, 1947).

⁸⁶ Vining, *Friend of Life*.

to Jones' mission and ideas, perhaps because Vining was a Quaker and knew Jones. Vining records in the Preface that she consulted extensively with Jones' daughter Mary Hoxie, as well as with prominent English Quakers who knew him. She also had access to a wealth of material, including published and unpublished manuscripts, notebooks and photographs. I also consulted David Hinshaw's biography, *Rufus Jones, Master Quaker*, published in 1951, but found it largely redundant by the side of Vining, and somewhat hagiographical in tone.⁸⁷

1.2.4.2 Archival letters

Jones was a prominent figure within Quakerism at a time that was seeing significant changes in theology. He thus functioned as a hub for correspondence on a range of momentous issues. The Rufus Jones Special Collection at Haverford College contains thousands of letters to and from Jones that are currently only available on request. The letters are detailed in a 270-page pdf document that records all the material available (for example letters, lecture notes, diaries).⁸⁸ Information provided on the letters includes the writer, or the recipient in the case of letters from Jones, the date, and a few words describing the content. External users are permitted to purchase up to 100 pages of scanned documents per year, so I obtained about 80 letters (many covering up to 6 pages) and various other documents relevant to the topic of this thesis. Some of the letters are reproduced in Appendix C. While a visit to Haverford would unearth more material, I have obtained all the letters that appear to be relevant to this thesis.

The letters themselves span half a century. The authors range from Jones' now-forgotten readers to Quaker leaders such as John Wilhelm Rowntree and Edward Grubb. They include scholars of mysticism such as Evelyn Underhill and William Inge, and, in relation to the AFSC, the American Quaker president Herbert Hoover.

⁸⁷ Hinshaw, *Master Quaker*.

⁸⁸ Available at <http://www.haverford.edu/library/special/aids/rufusjones/rmjones.xml>, accessed 2 December 2015.

Some of the letters raise intellectual concerns. But more than that, their deeply personal tone, expressed in flamboyant or cramped calligraphy, reveals the depth of emotion that was being aroused by the changes in Quakerism. The liberal headmaster Thomas Newlin, for example, regrets that local families are sending their sons into military service rather than entrusting them to his school, and is clearly hurt by being called an 'infidel' and 'atheist'.⁸⁹ At the other end of the theological spectrum, the elderly John Douglas alternates between vehement diatribes against Jones' ideas, denouncing his book recommendations as 'Poison', and distress that the faith that was good enough for his 'dear mother' was being discredited.⁹⁰ They also serve as an important reminder that the theological issues were superimposed on pre-existing loyalties and opinions – Jones' readers often addressed the way that *Social Law* endorsed or contradicted their current worldview, with delight or dismay, respectively. In sum, the sheer range of personalities, subjects and reactions on display makes the letters a fascinating resource that links theological ideas and Quaker practice to the more subjective and emotional factors at play. They are not always carefully argued, but they provide vivid snapshots of how Jones' ideas were being received.

Note that because of the variety of forms of dates used (American, English and occasionally Quaker, with the month referred to by number), I have cited dates with a named month.

1.2.4.3 Academic engagement

Academic study of Jones is sparse and mostly confined to scholars of Quakerism, so there is limited opportunity for critical engagement with the literature. This scarcity is clear in Claus Bernet's 2009 bibliographical work on Jones: the list of primary sources runs to 85 pages and that of secondary ones to only nine.⁹¹ Many of these

⁸⁹ Thomas Newlin, 16 August 1897, HC Box 1 [reproduced in Appendix C].

⁹⁰ John Douglas, 13 February 1903, HC Box 7 [reproduced in Appendix C].

⁹¹ Bernet, *Rufus Jones*.

secondary sources are theses written in the 1940s and 1950s (some of which have recently become available online via ProQuest) and papers that seem to refer to Jones only tangentially. By 1956, when Wilmer Cooper submitted his PhD on Jones for publication, he was told that nothing more was being published on Jones because demand was insufficient.⁹²

In the decades that followed, most of the few articles written on Jones focused on his theory of the mystical origins of Quakerism.⁹³ Today, however, there are signs that interest in Jones is reviving: Kerry Walters edited a compilation of Jones' writings in 2001, and Michael Hedstrom has discussed how Jones' books contributed to making mysticism middlebrow in an article and as part of a chapter in a book.⁹⁴ Not surprisingly, given his acknowledged contribution to Quakerism, Jones also features heavily in the recent *Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, in which his influence is discussed in 19 out of the 37 articles.⁹⁵ Of particular interest here are two recent papers: Guy Aiken's analysis of Jones' Christology in 2011 (discussed in Chapter 6) and Hugh Rock's analysis of Jones's mysticism (discussed in Chapter 9).⁹⁶ The very different view I have from Rock suggests that there is considerable scope for further research on Jones and his thought.

Jones' ideas are also mentioned in a few of the early Swarthmore lectures. This annual lecture series was established in 1908 with a dual aim: 'to interpret further to the members of the Society of Friends their Message and Mission' and 'to bring before the public the spirit, the aims and the fundamental principles of the

⁹² Cooper, 'Reflections on Rufus M. Jones', 27.

⁹³ For example see M. B. Endy, 'The interpretation of Quakerism: Rufus Jones and his critics', *Quaker History* 70 (1981): 3–21; S. A. Kent 'Psychological and mystical interpretations of early Quakerism: William James and Rufus Jones', *Religion* 17 (1987): 251–274.

⁹⁴ Walters, *Essential Writings*; Hedstrom, 'Mysticism for the masses'; Hedstrom, *Rise of Liberal Religion*.

⁹⁵ S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2015).

⁹⁶ Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?'; H. Rock, 'Rufus Jones never did establish that Quakerism is a mystical religion', *Quaker Studies* 21 (2016): 49–66.

Friends'.⁹⁷ The title of the series is a reference to Swarthmore Hall, the home of Margaret Fell, who married George Fox after being widowed. Perhaps because these lectures were initially presented rather than published, however, they often do not mention Jones by name even when it is very likely that it is his ideas that the speaker has in mind. It also needs to be borne in mind that many of the early lectures were given by those who were part of the liberal/modernist movement and who were therefore generally sympathetic to Jones' ideas.⁹⁸

1.2.4.4 Records of Quaker Meetings

Quakers are assiduous record keepers, and consequently an additional, but relatively minor, source of information on Jones can be found in the records of Quaker meetings now available on ancestry.com. Of the 300 or so records that relate to Jones, most are fairly inconsequential, but they do serve to indicate the esteem and affection in which he was held. One entry, for example, records that he 'received a welcome so cordial as to amount to an ovation'.⁹⁹

1.3 Thesis outline

Because Jones' thought is a complex synthesis of Quaker-inspired spirituality and 'modern thought', I start by detailing how his experience of God was nurtured and given a framework within Quakerism (Chapter 2) and then summarize the main strands of the 'modern thought' he encountered at Harvard University (Chapter 3). The body of the thesis then analyses the ideas in *Social Law* in detail. First, I look at the 'building blocks' of his system, exploring and critiquing the way he envisaged God, human nature and Christ (Chapters 4 to 6). Next, I look at how he fitted these building blocks together both in theory, namely in this concept of the Inner Light

⁹⁷ See e.g. H. G. Wood, *Quakerism and the Future of the Church* (Swarthmore Lecture 1920) (London: Swarthmore Press, 1920), preface (unnumbered).

⁹⁸ See e.g. Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 86

⁹⁹ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681-1935* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014. Haverford College; Haverford, Pennsylvania; *Minutes, 1924-1935*; Collection: *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes*; Call Number: N4.3

(Chapters 7), and in practice, namely in his approach to mysticism (Chapter 8). I then consider how Jones' thought was received and interpreted, both immediately after the publication of *Social Law* and in the century since (Chapter 9). Finally, I offer some conclusions and sketch a number of ways in which Jones's thought could be brought into dialogue with present-day theological concerns (Chapter 10).

This approach, rather than for example an analysis of each chapter of *Social Law*, enables me to present Jones' thought in a more systematic way than he did himself. The strengths and weaknesses of his arguments and the internal coherence of his views are thereby more transparent. A brief overview of each chapter is as follows.

Chapter 2: A worldview in the making: Jones' childhood experience of God and Quaker education

Social Law aimed to show that God and man are bound up in an organic relationship. In this chapter I draw on Jones' memoirs to explore how this conviction had its origins in his childhood experiences of God (i.e. his *experiential basis*). I then explain how it was given an initial framework in terms of Quaker concepts and later informed by books he read while a student at Haverford.

Chapter 3: Encounters with modern thought

This chapter continues the story by describing Jones' encounter with various aspects of modern thought. I start with the Manchester Conference of 1895, which heralded the emergence of the liberal/modernist strand within Quakerism. I then consider Jones' interactions with various Harvard philosophers, focusing on William James and Josiah Royce. I suggest areas of consonance between these thinkers and Jones, but also point out where they diverged. The next three chapters consider the implications of these similarities and differences for Jones' understanding of God, human nature and Christ.

Chapter 4: God is personal

In this chapter I examine how Jones sought to synthesize the personal, Christian God with the potentially impersonal God or ultimate consciousness of idealism. I conclude that he tries to do so using insights from James' psychology but that the fact that Royce's ideas about God were not unequivocally Christian means that Jones has a *multivalent theism*. Furthermore, he emphasizes the immanence of God at the expense of the transcendence of God, although this is in part due to his *theological naivety* and he goes some way to redressing this imbalance in later years.

Chapter 5: Humans are socio-spiritual beings

Jones saw humans as having both social and spiritual aspects. As such, his treatment of human nature is a complex blend of psychological insights from James, regarding the nature of consciousness, ideals and transformation, and of theological concepts from Christianity. In this chapter I discuss and critique Jones' views on consciousness, sin, salvation, habit and conscience. I suggest that his *reliance on psychology* often resulted in accusations of humanism. However, I conclude that for Jones God is deeply rooted in human nature, meaning that these accusations, which arise in part from his *informal style*, are unjustified.

Chapter 6: Christ reveals God

Jones self-identified as both a Quaker and a Christian and wrote *Social Law* to defend Christianity against the advances of psychology. But just what he understood by Christianity is not always clear. In this chapter, I examine some central Christological concepts (the incarnation, atonement, Christ's indwelling) as they are expressed (generally in passing) in *Social Law* and in two of Jones' contemporaneous works. I conclude that Jones sees Christ as the fullest revelation of God and as drawing individuals to God by setting ideals, but that the fact that he approaches questions about Christ's nature through his *reliance on psychology*

rather than through the Chalcedonian definition, for example, means that his understanding diverges from that of the core of conviction. I end with an interim summary of Chapters 4 to 6, commenting on Jones' view of Christianity from a number of angles. With this groundwork in place, the remainder of the thesis looks at his particularly Quaker focus, the Inner Light and mysticism.

Chapter 7: The Inner Light is both human and divine

The Inner Light has always been a defining, if ambiguous, concept within Quakerism. Because it is concerned with the relationship between humans and God, and because this relationship was at the centre of *Social Law*, Jones' ideas naturally found their way into the heart of Quakerism. In this chapter, I first provide a brief overview of how the Inner Light has been understood historically and then assess the arguments that Jones uses to defend his definition against the traditional view of Barclay, namely that the Inner Light was not something 'foreign' injected into the soul but an inherent part of human nature. I conclude that the picture he presents reflects his own experience but that the biblical, philosophical and psychological arguments he proposes are too superficial to be convincing, and that, furthermore, this picture is complicated in later years because he presents his views in different ways at different times. Although this is perhaps what should be expected given Jones' *informal style* and deliberate *theological naivety*, it does perhaps mean that Jones' far-reaching influence on this topic rests on shaky foundations.

Chapter 8: Mysticism is a felt experience of God

Jones' formulation of the Inner Light implies that everyone should be able to experience God's presence, and in the early 20th century the natural way to express this experience was in the language of mysticism. Surprisingly, however, although Jones has been called the founder of modern mystical Quakerism, his views on mysticism have received relatively little critical attention. In this chapter, I first

provide some historical context by charting how mysticism became such a popular topic at the turn of the 20th century and comparing Jones' views with those of other prominent scholars of mysticism. I then refer to Jones' wider corpus to flesh out the view of mysticism that is apparent in seminal form in *Social Law*, arguing that he understands it as a felt experience of God that leads to the transformation of the individual and society.

Chapter 9: Reactions to the ideas in Social Law

This chapter traces the reception of Jones' ideas both straight after the publication of *Social Law* (through archived letters and reviews) and in the century since (through a few articles and comments in books). I conclude that Jones' thought must be considered as a whole and that it must be acknowledged that he views the universe as fundamentally spiritual. I suggest that commentators who fail to do either of these things misinterpret him.

Chapter 10: Conclusion: Does Rufus Jones [still] speak to our time?

Here I first offer a summary of my research. I then briefly consider where Jones' thought might be relevant today. I suggest that arguments from recent research in neuroscience and theological anthropology could possibly be used to support his view of the Inner Light, that behind his mystical terminology he envisages a relationship with God that can be described using more recent terminology from the literature on religious experience, and that he may have insights to offer today's Liberal Quakers regarding the relationship between spiritual practices and social action.

Summary

Social Law in the Spiritual World was the seminal work of an influential Quaker thinker. It presents an intriguing blend of Christianity, psychology and idealism at a time when Christianity was adapting to 'modern thought' and when psychology was

simultaneously investigating psychic phenomena, making metaphysical pronouncements and seeking scientific credibility. Its central theme was a reformulation of the human–divine relationship, and, I suggest, it was because Jones cast this relationship in terms of the key Quaker concept of the Inner Light and associated it with mysticism that this reformulation had a significant impact on the way that Quakerism developed over the course of the 20th century.

Although the importance of *Social Law* and Jones' ambivalent legacy have been recognized, the book's ideas and arguments have not been critiqued in detail. My thesis will argue that it can be seen as Jones' attempt to synthesize his Quaker-informed experience of the inward presence of God with aspects of the psychology of William James and the idealism of Josiah Royce. I will suggest that while Jones approached this synthesis from a Christian perspective, it is consistent with a form of Quakerism that could embrace religions other than Christianity. This is because the 'more' of James' and the 'Absolute' of Royce were not straightforwardly identical to the loving Father of mainstream Christianity, because Jones had an experiential approach to Christianity and avoided theological concepts, and because as a popular, informal writer he was open to being misinterpreted.

My hope is that this analysis will provide some historical insight into today's post-Christian British Quakerism while also offering an informative historical case study on the relationship between psychology and Christianity. The starting point is Jones' immersion in a Christian Quaker environment.

Chapter 2

A worldview in the making: Jones' childhood experience of God and Quaker education

*The environment into which I came ministered in happy harmony to the natural bent of disposition.*¹

A man 'trusts his temperament', observed William James, and 'wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it'.² In other words, a person's philosophy is determined by their intuitive sense of what the universe is like and only secondarily defended by reason. Whether or not James' observation holds universally, the next two chapters will suggest that it does seem to do so for Jones.

As noted in the previous chapter, Jones saw the most important aspect of his childhood as the 'mystical' propensity of his family, and recalled that 'The environment into which I came ministered in happy harmony to the natural bent of disposition.'³ Jones is thus suggesting that his defining characteristic as a child was his mystical disposition, which as we will see he took to be the ability to experience God's presence in everyday life. A James-inspired starting point for an analysis of Jones' ideas in *Social Law* is therefore to focus on his early religious experience, which gave him an intuitive sense of what God, and therefore the universe, was

¹ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 191.

² W. James, *Pragmatism* (Public Domain Books, 1907), 3.

³ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 191.

like, and on the Quakers of his childhood and youth who provided an initial representation of that God and God's relationship to the universe. This chapter thus considers Jones' childhood and his undergraduate years at Haverford, with the next one introducing individuals from outside Quakerism whom Jones met at Harvard and whose thought he attempted to make consistent with his early religious experience and worldview.

The task of identifying which figures influenced Jones, both in his childhood and during his time at college, necessarily involves making a selection from many potential candidates. Back in 1960, Gordon Atkins wrote his thesis on the mystical idealism of Jones and made his choice in consultation with Jones' close friend and colleague Douglas Steere. They settled on six figures clearly associated with the topic of mysticism: three individuals representing the development of mysticism in Western Europe (Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, George Fox), and three more representing the development of mysticism in America (John Woolman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman).⁴ Given that the focus of my thesis is *Social Law*, my selection is governed by the major influences I see at work therein.

My selection is informed partly by Jones' explicit comments about sources of influence in *Social Law* itself, and partly by a judgment about which individuals contribute in a more diffuse way to *Social Law* on the basis of his autobiographical books. The Introduction to *Social Law* states that 'I owe a very great debt to my two teachers, Professor G.H. Palmer and Professor Josiah Royce, of Harvard. William James, of the same institution, has, through his books, been another teacher of great influence'.⁵ These individuals thus meet my selection criteria, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴ G. Atkins, 'A Critical Examination of the Mystical Idealism of Rufus Matthew Jones' (PhD thesis, Univ. Southern California, 1960), 29.

⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 21.

This chapter, however, focuses on individuals that feature in the first two volumes of his autobiographies. This first section covers Jones' childhood, introducing significant relatives and teachers, but also two eminent early Quakers, George Fox and John Woolman. The second section discusses his undergraduate years at Haverford, identifying the diverse figures that Jones encountered in the library, namely the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Romantic poets, the ground-breaking scientist/theologian Henry Drummond, the Quaker abolitionist, poet and mystic John Greenleaf Whittier, and the 2nd-century theologian Clement of Alexandria.

2.1 A Quaker childhood: Spiritual practices and inspiring people

Jones' childhood environment encompassed the natural beauty of South China, the rural community of farmers and labourers of which he was an integral part, the pervading presence of Quakerism, the example of spiritually inspiring relatives, and a schooling illuminated by progressive teachers. My aim in this section is to show how these childhood experiences formed his character, nurtured his mystical disposition, and established the basis of his worldview. I start, though, by taking a step backwards and considering two eminent Quakers who shaped the attitudes and beliefs of Jones' Quaker community.

2.1.1 Eminent Quakers: George Fox and John Woolman

Many of the early Quakers wrote journals, and those of George Fox and John Woolman were especially revered by Quakers. Judging by his comments about reinterpreting Fox in the light of Emerson (see Section 2.2.3 below), Jones was familiar with Fox growing up, and almost certainly would have been with Woolman, although he does not mention this explicitly. They are considered here by virtue of their pervasive influence on Quakerism and because Jones' admiration for them is clear.

George Fox (1624–1691), the charismatic founder of Quakerism, suffered from depression in his youth and became a Seeker, wandering the countryside with his Bible rather than attending church. Lamenting that no one could ‘speak to [his] condition’, he came to realize that ‘to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ’.⁶ A turning point came when he heard a voice proclaiming that ‘there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition’.⁷ Fox’s distrust of ecclesiastical authority and his emphasis on knowing ‘experimentally’ (i.e. experientially) that wisdom and guidance come directly from God subsequently became cornerstones of Quaker belief and practice and are axiomatic to Jones’ thought.

Jones published a popular edited version of Fox’s journal in 1903.⁸ Recently bereaved, he movingly dedicated it to the memory of his son Lowell: ‘To the sweet and shining memory of the little lad whose beautiful life was a visible revelation to me of the truth, which this autobiography teaches, that the divine and the human are not far-sundered.’⁹ The dedication suggests that Jones had found his own ‘experimental’ confirmation of what he saw to be Fox’s central idea: that God and humans are not separated. Also of note is that Jones claims that ‘the progress of religious truth during the last hundred years has been toward the truth which [Fox] made central in his message’.¹⁰ Jones was here presumably referring to Fox’s emphasis on inward experience, and he adds a footnote to this rather sweeping statement from William James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience*: ‘The Quaker religion which [George Fox] founded is something which it is impossible to overpraise. In a day of shams, it was a religion of veracity rooted in spiritual inwardness.’ This is certainly a commendation from James, although it falls short of

⁶ R. M. Jones, *George Fox, An Autobiography*, edited with an Introduction by R.M. Jones (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1903), loc. 702, Kindle.

⁷ Jones, *George Fox*, loc. 704, Kindle.

⁸ He wrote to John Wilhelm Rowntree on 9 February 1904 that ‘Everybody in this part of the world is reading it and it is really taking hold inside and outside “our Society”’ (Box 48).

⁹ Jones, *George Fox*, loc. 12, Kindle.

¹⁰ Jones, *George Fox*, loc. 173, Kindle.

a convincing proof of Fox's message. It demonstrates, however, how Jones was interpreting this fundamental Quaker idea of the relationship between humans and God as being in line with 'progress' in knowledge, and that he was appealing to the authority of William James in a very general way to back up this claim.

John Woolman (1720–1772) was variously a merchant, tailor, itinerant Quaker preacher and early abolitionist. His journal, in print since 1774, is a prominent spiritual work: Jones refers to it as a remarkable document that describes the 'silent, ineffable processes by which his soul was brought to inward unity, and then into living communion with "the pure Spirit of Life and Truth"'.¹¹

Many of Woolman's views about conscience and the importance of social action are echoed in Jones' life and writings. Woolman's conscience was particularly sensitive, and indeed he believed that it was a God-given faculty to be cultivated by obedience to its promptings: 'He whose tender mercies are over all his works hath placed a principle in the human mind, which incites to exercise goodness towards every living creature; and this being singly attended to, people become tender-hearted and sympathizing; but when frequently and totally rejected, the mind becomes shut up in a contrary disposition.'¹² Under the compulsion of his conscience, for example, Woolman notoriously began to wear only undyed clothes once he realized that dye was harming slaves.¹³ Jones, as we will see in Chapter 5, likewise held that conscience had a divine sense of 'ought' but also involved human effort. Furthermore, it was obedience to these promptings from God that resulted in social action (to be discussed in Chapter 8) that Jones aspired to and identified as 'the ideal of Quaker mysticism'.¹⁴

¹¹ Jones, *Middle Years*, 199.

¹² J. Woolman, *The Journal of John Woolman, Quaker* (Ignacio Hills, 1774), loc. 171, Kindle.

¹³ Woolman, *Journal*, loc. 1432, Kindle.

¹⁴ Jones, *Middle Years*, 201.

As argued by Southern, in the absence of a creed, early Quakers function as a source of authority in Quakerism, and it is notable that they would come to be interpreted by Jones in terms of the liberal Quakerism that he espoused.¹⁵ Their spiritual insights were ingrained in Quakerism, as will become apparent as we turn to look at the community in which Jones was raised.

2.1.2 The Quaker community in South China, Maine

In *A Small-Town Boy*, Jones reflects on how life in a rural community shaped his character.¹⁶ He revelled in the beauty of the natural environment – the bald eagles that nested near the lake, the distant mountains, the cry of loons, and the horse and cart rides to Meeting through majestic woods – and felt that an appreciation of this beauty kept him morally and spiritually safe.¹⁷ The unofficial leader of the local farm-boys, Jones says he gained courage through physical challenges such as climbing on ‘perilous roofs’ and, literally, skating on thin ice.¹⁸ He claimed that although he was no goody-goody (he happily drank a barrel of cider that a farmer had carelessly left lying around, and, on one memorable occasion, skipped school to sneak into a house that was being hauled along the frozen lake to a new location), he learnt that it was possible to ‘maintain one’s own ideals of life without being a prig, and to win at the same time the respect and even the affection of one’s associates’.¹⁹ His oratorical skills were honed at the local grocery store, where the owner had Jones mount the counter to read important newspaper articles to the men sitting on chairs and barrel heads and boxes. ‘It was here on the counter’, reflected Jones, ‘that I first learned how to articulate clearly and to get ideas across effectively to a body of listeners.’²⁰ The courage, leadership and communication

¹⁵ A. Southern, ‘The Rowntree History Series and the growth of liberal Quakerism’, *Quaker Studies* 16 (2011): 7–73

¹⁶ Jones, *Small-Town Boy*, viii.

¹⁷ Jones, *Small-Town Boy*, 36; Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 49.

¹⁸ Jones, *Small-Town Boy*, 108.

¹⁹ Jones, *Small-Town Boy*, 70.

²⁰ Jones, *Small-Town Boy*, 64.

skills that Jones developed in South China would all be put to good use in later years.

Jones gained most of his early religious ideas from his family, whom he described as 'intensely evangelical'.²¹ The Bible certainly played a prominent role in his life – there were family Bible readings morning and evening, and Jones began to go to Bible School when he was six. At age 10, when he was bedbound for nine months with blood-poisoning (a well-intentioned doctor had lanced a bruise on Jones' foot, but unfortunately with a knife sharpened on the scythe stone in the barn), he passed the time by reading the Bible out loud to his grandmother. He had recuperated by the time he got to the New Testament, but felt that 'the Old Testament was the book of my boyhood ... It gave me my first poetry and my first history, and I got my growing ideas of God from it.'²² Crucially, however, although his family was not familiar with the rise of biblical criticism, they followed George Fox in believing that the Bible was inspired but not God's final word. This attitude, Jones recalled gratefully, enabled him to 'find and love [the Bible's] treasures' while making use of 'all that science and history have revealed of God's creative work'.²³

Alongside this biblically informed worldview sat the above-mentioned mystical propensity of his family and the wider Quaker community. Every day after breakfast there was a long period of family silent worship during which the older members 'seemed to be communing in joyous fellowship with a real presence', and by age four Jones was joining the two-hour mostly silent Quaker Meeting for Worship, where he found 'a gleam of eternal reality'.²⁴ It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Jones claimed that 'I was the kind of child that had no more difficulty in seeing Jacob's ladders going up from earth to heaven than I had in seeing where the best

²¹ Jones discusses the role the Bible played in his childhood in Chapter IV of *Finding the Trail*. The comment about his family being intensely evangelical is on p.66.

²² Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 65.

²³ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 66.

²⁴ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 192.

apples grew.’²⁵ As we will see in later chapters, this experience of God as involved in the everyday life of everyday people and the role of the group in fostering this awareness are fundamental aspects of Jones’ approach to mysticism.

Within this Quaker environment, two of Jones’ relatives stood out. The first was his Aunt Peace, whom he describes as a refined and saintly woman with remarkable spiritual gifts. She had frequent spiritual insights into his life, Jones says, and on his birth had taken him in her arms and proclaimed that ‘This child will one day bear the message of the Gospel to distant lands and to peoples across the sea.’²⁶ It seems likely that Jones’ conviction that she was ‘having direct intercourse with a great Companion’ contributed to his view that God and humans were inherently related.²⁷ She also stressed the love and grace of God, so that Jones said he never feared the wrath of God, a conviction that again likely affected the position he took in arguing against more evangelical forms of Quakerism that stressed the possibility of God’s punishment (see Chapter 4).²⁸

The second was his Uncle Eli. Eli Jones and his wife Sybil were prominent Quaker missionaries who had established Friends schools in Palestine. They made sin ‘awfully real’ to Jones as a boy, but he remembered the striking note of their preaching not as sin but as ‘the beauty and joy and peace which the true life gives’.²⁹ Complementary to this emphasis was the realization learnt from watching Eli that the goodness of character Jones desired was ‘not something miraculous that drops into a soul out of the skies, but is rather something which is formed within as one faithfully does his set tasks, and goes to work with an enthusiastic passion to help make other people good.’³⁰

²⁵ Jones, ‘Why I enroll’, 191.

²⁶ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 20.

²⁷ Jones, ‘Why I enroll’, 193.

²⁸ Jones, *Life in College*, 88.

²⁹ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 87.

³⁰ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 121.

Jones' comments on Peace and Eli display two complementary approaches to religion that, as we will see, Jones attempted throughout his life to hold in tension. What struck Jones about Peace was her intimate relationship with God; and what struck him about Eli was the necessity of human effort in forming a good character. A focus on a relationship with God without an emphasis on human effort might result in what Jones would later call 'negation mysticism' (see Chapter 8), namely a desire for God that sought an experience of God as an end in itself. An emphasis on social action without an underlying relationship with God might result in humanism (see Chapter 5).

The main academic input of note came from Jones' science teacher, Thomas J. Battey. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* had been published 20 years earlier, in 1859, and Battey had studied with Louis Agassiz, who argued against Darwinian evolution, and with Asa Gray, who endorsed it, at Harvard.³¹ Gray's view must have prevailed, because Jones remarks that it was in Battey's class that he first heard the 'astonishing fact' that the world was not made in six days 6000 years ago. Battey, however, offered an interpretative framework that would inspire Jones for the rest of his life: '[Battey] carried us over from our childish idea of a God who worked from the outside like a mechanic to the higher conception of a God who works from within as a living creative energy. He helped us to realize that the account in Genesis is a great poetic story ... I leaped forward to the new view and with it I won my spiritual freedom.'³²

Two points of interest for this thesis are apparent from Jones' remark. The first is the conviction that science and religion can be reconciled. Without the belief that this was possible, *Social Law* would not have been written. The second is the emphasis on the immanence rather than the transcendence of God, namely of God working from within as a creative energy rather than from the outside. In *Social Law*

³¹ Vining, *Friend of Life*, p.63.

³² Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 138–139.

Jones tends to emphasize God's immanence at the expense of God's transcendence, although, as we will see in Chapter 4, in later years he went some way to redressing this balance.

In summary, Jones' home life fostered his innate mystical temperament, in the sense that he was often aware of God's presence, and convinced him that God communicated with individuals on a day-to-day basis. The early framework within which he interpreted this experience was biblically informed and drew on the spiritual insights of the Quaker tradition.

Even at this early stage in Jones' life, three important convictions can be identified. First, the religious life involves both a felt relationship with God and the need to do good with 'enthusiastic passion'. Second, God is immanent, with little sense that God is also transcendent. Third, science can be reconciled with religion. Each of these convictions exhibits a source of tension, namely the need to hold two potentially either/or options (spiritual experience/action, immanence/transcendence, science/religion) in balance. Subsequent chapters will consider how Jones attempted to achieve this balance, and how commentators, by emphasizing one side or the other of his resolution of these tensions, have come to diverse interpretations of his message. First, though, we consider the next stage of Jones' education, Haverford College, where he began to expand this early interpretive framework to include figures from outside the Quaker tradition.

2.2 Haverford College: A broad education

'The cure for scepticism is always deeper knowledge', insisted Jones in *Social Law*,³³ expressing an attitude that was certainly in line with that prevailing at Haverford. The college had been founded by Quakers who held that the 1827 schism that

³³ Jones, *Social Law*, 15.

resulted in two strands of Quakerism (Orthodox and Hicksite Quakers, see Chapter 7 and Appendix A) was the result of ignorance and were keen to provide a remedy.³⁴ During Jones' time as a student there (1882 to 1885), Haverford benefitted from strong links with Harvard and had some exceptionally gifted teachers. Chief among these was Pliny Earle Chase. Jones described Chase as a radiant Christian and, not without reason, a 'universal savant' (Chase had published 200 papers on subjects including astronomy and meteorology and rumour had it that he read a hundred languages).³⁵ He was to have a lasting influence on Jones' spiritual and intellectual development.

Jones' education at Haverford was broad, and four related strands of it are evident both in the content and, less obviously, in the style of *Social Law*. The first relates to the emotional and theological crises engendered by developments in science towards the end of the 19th century.³⁶ It was Pliny Chase's use of Henry Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* that would eventually provide the inspiration (and title) for *Social Law*. The second was Jones' enduring love of poetry, fostered by Thomas Chase, Pliny's brother and the Principal of Haverford. Jones recalls that Thomas Chase gave his students 'the *feel* of great literature' by showing 'how noble poetry should be read in meter'.³⁷ The third was Jones' developing fascination with mysticism. Jones wrote his undergraduate dissertation on 'Mysticism and its exponents', and it was in researching this topic that he realized that he had 'found the field of [his] life work'.³⁸ His understanding of mysticism owed much to the Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier. The fourth was an interpretation of Christianity that was coloured by the 2nd-century theologian Clement of Alexandria

³⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 35.

³⁵ Jones, *Life in College*, 40.

³⁶ Jones, *Life in College*, 64.

³⁷ Jones, *Life in College*, 56.

³⁸ Jones, *Life in College*, 133.

What I aim to do in this section is to discuss these strands, to show how Jones wove them together, to point out where they diverged from the core of conviction, and to indicate how they would reappear in *Social Law*.

2.2.1 Science: Henry Drummond

The need to reconcile science and religion was a pressing one for many Christians at the end of the 19th century. Jones recalls that Thomas Huxley, ‘Darwin’s bulldog’, was at the peak of his reputation, and the adjustment between Christianity and evolution had not yet been thought through.³⁹ Early attempts had centred on William Paley’s 1802 *Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*. Jones was not impressed. ‘What a mistake it was to go on teaching Paley’s Evidences to English and American youth clear up to the end of the last century’, he complained: ‘We all quickly knew that Paley was barren soil on which no nutriment grew for the soul.’⁴⁰

Relief came when Chase brought a ‘thick, new book’ to class, declaring it to be by a ‘new prophet’ in the age of science. The book was *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*; the prophet, Henry Drummond. The central question it addressed was, ‘Is there not reason to believe that many of the Laws of the Spiritual World, hitherto regarded as occupying an entirely separate province, are simply the Laws of the Natural World?’⁴¹ Drummond thus discusses natural phenomena ranging from parasites to the environment and draws spiritual analogies. Jones enthused that, while the book was imperfect, it came ‘like water to shipwrecked men’.⁴² Its impact is apparent in the Introduction to *Social Law*, where Jones wrote of the experience that had occurred nearly 20 years previously: ‘We found at a leap that the two worlds could go together, that science and religion were not two discordant

³⁹ Jones, *Life in College*, 64.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Life in College*, 43.

⁴¹ H. Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* (New York, NY: Hurst & Co [1883]), Kindle, p.1.

⁴² Jones, *Life in College*, 64–65.

languages ... and that all that we had learned or could learn by studying nature only added to the riches of the knowledge of the glory of God.'⁴³ In *Social Law*, Jones aimed to do for psychology what Drummond had done for the natural sciences.

Jones' reactions to Paley and Drummond, then, reveal that for him reconciliation between science and religion needed to be more than just intellectually satisfying. Indeed, Jones describes the early rift in almost visceral rather than academic terms: 'It will be difficult, perhaps impossible, for my readers now living in peace in the lee of the dykes, to realize in any vivid way what it was like to be thrown into that open sea when the euroclydon was in full sweep.'⁴⁴ One of the ways that Jones ensured that *Social Law* was not spiritually sterile was to make use of poetry within the text itself. His ability to use poetry effectively again had its origin at Haverford.

2.2.2 Poetry: The Romantic poets

As noted in the previous chapter, both Liberal Christians and Liberal Quakers embraced the concept of the 'poet-prophet'. William Blake was the first in a series of poets to offer a belief system to supplement, or sometimes replace, conventional Christianity.⁴⁵ Subsequently, Wordsworth tendered an ecstatic nature mysticism, Thomas Carlyle made the bold claim that the poet and prophet were fundamentally the same and had penetrated the sacred mystery of the universe, and Matthew Arnold was convinced that most of what passed for religion would soon be overtaken by poetry. In America, the supreme example is perhaps Walt Whitman, with his 1871 proclamation that 'the priest departs, the divine literus comes'.⁴⁶ Traditionally Quakers viewed the arts with some suspicion, but by the 1880s attitudes were more accepting,⁴⁷ as evidenced by a 1902 article in *The British*

⁴³ Jones, *Social Law*, 10.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Middle Years*, 64–65.

⁴⁵ Robertson, 'Reading poetry religiously', 18–19.

⁴⁶ W. Whitman, 'Democratic vistas', in J. Kaplan (ed.) *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (New York: Library of America, 1982).

⁴⁷ See e.g. W. Jolliff, 'The practice of writing: A Quaker poet's perspective', in *Quakers and Literature*, ed. P. Anderson (Longmeadow, MA: Full Media Services, 2016).

Friend, which asserted that ‘the divine message’ is entrusted to poets as well as to preachers, and in fact may well prove more enduring, as ‘the poet’s voice goes on sounding down the ages’.⁴⁸

Haverford in Jones’ era certainly embraced poetry.⁴⁹ President Chase was well connected to prominent literary men. He invited the academic and politician James Bryce to lecture the students on Dante, and Matthew Arnold captured the imagination of the students all the more strongly because Chase’s invitation to him was overruled by more cautious Haverford managers. Chase, as noted, read poetry aloud with elan, and he taught some students, including Jones, Italian so that they could read Dante in the original. Chase’s enthusiasm was obviously infectious, as Jones reports that he discovered Carlyle in part because during his first year there was ‘a strong run’ on him by the seniors.⁵⁰ He recalls becoming ‘almost saturated’ with the poems of James Russell Lowell, and also absorbed Wordsworth, Tennyson, Ralph Waldo Emerson and John Greenleaf Whittier.⁵¹ It seems likely that the themes of the sublime, nature and the supernatural that are associated with Romanticism would have resonated with the mystical element of Jones’ nature. In later years he credited Wordsworth and Coleridge as interpreting the spiritual life of humans in ‘fresh and transforming ways’ because they had ‘discovered that man is essentially a spiritual being’.⁵² As with his childhood home environment, then, Jones was fortunate in that this poetry-soaked milieu again ministered to his disposition.

Of particular interest here is that Jones’ excursions into poetry were intertwined with his developing belief system. As he put it, ‘all my reading fed into my religious life and was at the same time in large measure determined by it’, and the passages he selected for memorization almost always ministered to his growing faith.⁵³

⁴⁸ *British Friend*, ‘A modern “defence of poesie”’ (by G.E.C.), *The British Friend* (October 1902): 270.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Life in College*, 56, and Chapter VI *passim*.

⁵⁰ Jones, *Life in College*, 79.

⁵¹ Jones, *Life in College*, Chapter VI.

⁵² R. M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, Vol. 1, (London: Macmillan, 1921), 438.

⁵³ Jones, *Life in College*, 82.

Significantly, he tended to put poets on a spiritual pedestal, following Carlyle in proclaiming that poets and mystics 'at bottom pretty much belong to the same order of being', and in *Social Law* he does not approach any of beliefs expressed in the poems critically.⁵⁴ This uncritical admiration (discussed further in Chapter 5) seems to originate in his view that the wall between the conscious self and the subconscious life is extremely thin for the genius, whether this be a mystic or a poet.⁵⁵

It is notable that all the poems that made their way into *Social Law*, either as chapter epigraphs or within the text, describe the poet's experience of the divine but are not explicitly Christian or about Christ. Matthew Arnold is a case in point – in spite of his atheism he is quoted by Jones in the context of the relationship between humans and God (see Chapter 5). In this respect, T.S. Eliot's criticism, that the move to replace religion with poetry would divorce religion from thought and leave religion to be 'laid waste by the anarchy of feeling',⁵⁶ is pertinent, as it is congruent with my assertion, discussed later, that one of the reasons Jones diverged from the core of conviction was his experiential rather than theological approach to Christianity.

An important step in turning these initial ideas about and experiences of God into a coherent system of thought was Jones' encounter with the concept of mysticism.

2.2.3 Mysticism: Ralph Waldo Emerson

As noted, Jones wrote his graduating thesis on 'Mysticism and its Exponents'. Looking back on this decision in his sixties, he reflected that 'many features of my later life, up to the present moment, have been determined by that early decision to write a graduating thesis on Mysticism'.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ R. M. Jones, *Pathways to the Reality of God* (New York: MacMillan, 1931), 154.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 123.

⁵⁶ W. V. Davis, R. S. Thomas, *Poetry and Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 2

⁵⁷ Jones, *Life in College*, 134.

Two prominent figures in this emerging field of the study of mysticism had a particularly strong influence on Jones. The first was Robert Vaughan, author of the seminal *Hours with the Mystics* (1856). Jones 'read' and 're-read' the book, which provides an overview of mysticism through time and across cultures.⁵⁸ The book itself and its influence on transforming the perception of mysticism from a somewhat disreputable term to a respectable academic discipline is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. Here, I focus on the second figure, the Transcendentalist essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Born in 1803, Emerson studied at Harvard Divinity School before becoming junior minister at a Unitarian church in Boston, the city of his birth. In 1832 his resignation was reluctantly accepted when the congregation decided that they could not agree with his view that Jesus never intended communion to be administered in perpetuity.⁵⁹ After some time travelling in Europe, where he met and embraced the ideas of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Carlyle (the very poets admired by Jones), Emerson returned to Concord, Massachusetts. There he gathered around him a group that would become known as the Transcendental Club and earned his living as an essayist, poet and orator. His message was stirring ('Hitch your wagon to a star'; 'We live among surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate on them'⁶⁰), rather than drily intellectual. As the writer Harriet Martineau put it, 'He conquers minds, as well as hearts, wherever he goes; and without convincing anybody's reason of any one thing, exalts their reason, and makes their minds worth more than they ever were before.'⁶¹

Members of the Club emphasized that divinity pervaded humanity and nature. Of interest here is that this view was influenced by Quakerism. In fact, Emerson

⁵⁸ Jones, *Life in College*, 133.

⁵⁹ R. D. Richardson Jr, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), Kindle, loc. 2573.

⁶⁰ See R. W. Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. B. Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 2000).

⁶¹ From the Introduction Emerson, *Essential Writings*, xvi.

described himself as 'more of a Quaker than anything else'.⁶² He refers to George Fox and other Quakers in his journals, and took three Quaker volumes (*History of the Quakers, A Life of Fox* and *Life of Penn*) with him on retreat when he was thinking through his position on communion.⁶³ Furthermore, the list of the eight individuals who Emerson identified as having ministered to his highest wants included the Quakers Mary Rotch and Edward Stabler.⁶⁴ The former was a formidable woman who emphasized the importance of the Inner Light as a source of wisdom and guidance and provided the inspiration for Emerson's acclaimed essay 'Self-Reliance'.⁶⁵

Jones first encountered Emerson as a 'more or less accidental' choice of philosopher, picked to fulfil the requirements for a philosophy course,⁶⁶ but given that Emerson took his inspiration from the Romantic poets and Quakerism, and that he was a gifted writer who appealed to the heart as well as the head, there is little wonder that he would prove to be a lasting source of inspiration. Jones started by reading George Willis Cooke's *Life of Emerson*, which traced Emerson's spiritual pedigree and emphasized that he believed 'in the Inner Light of the Quaker, the Ecstasy of Plotinus, the Divine Illumination of Swedenborg'.⁶⁷ It was this alignment of Fox with the wider spiritual tradition that instigated a profound shift in perception within Jones. Fox himself was transformed from a 'provincial' to a 'cosmopolitan' figure, and Jones reports that he became conscious for the first time that the heart of Quakerism was mysticism, and that it was this that was the 'secret'

⁶² C. D. Gelatt, 'The Quaker Influence on Emerson' (MA dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1939), 1.

⁶³ Gelatt, 'The Quaker Influence', 15.

⁶⁴ Richardson, Emerson, loc. 4496, Kindle.

⁶⁵ Richardson, Emerson, loc. 3239, Kindle. Rotch was ejected from her position of elder in New Bedford for defending her 'New Light' beliefs that 'the Light within, not the Bible, was the final authority in Religion, for the Bible was only one expression of the spirit constantly active in every human soul' (loc. 3212).

⁶⁶ Jones, *Life in College*, 89.

⁶⁷ Jones has possibly misquoted the book's title here. The quotation is from G.W. Cooke, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Writings and Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1882), 323.

of his early religious life.⁶⁸ As will become clear in later chapters, these ideas permeate all of Jones' writing: he was not exaggerating when he called them 'epoch-making'.⁶⁹

Regarding Emerson's essays themselves, Jones claimed to have read all of them as a student, but to have focused on 'The Oversoul', 'Nature', 'Self-Reliance' and 'Spiritual Laws'.⁷⁰ Discernible echoes and direct quotations from these writings appear in many of Jones' books. Perhaps the most significant concept that Jones took from Emerson was that of the Oversoul, that Unity 'within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other'.⁷¹ He expressed the impact of the idea in a letter to his future wife Elizabeth Bartram in 1902: 'Now why didn't thee tell me more about the "Oversoul"? ... I also wanted to know what thee saw in Emerson's great essay. It has had so much to do with my life and I wish thee had given me thy glimpse.'⁷² The essence of the idea that Emerson conceptualized so succinctly and that Jones embraced so readily is that God and humans are related, and that, through this relationship, humans are related with each other. It is an idea that will be seen to underlie every chapter in this thesis.

Various other influences can be discerned in the above-named essays. In 'Self-Reliance', Emerson counsels that 'A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages.'⁷³ As noted, the inspiration for this essay came from Quaker Mary Rotch's ideas about the 'Light within'. The idea would surely have found experiential confirmation and therefore have gained credibility for Jones, both from the Quaker tradition generally and from his memories of relatives who experienced divine guidance. In 'Nature', Emerson expresses a reverence for the

⁶⁸ Jones, *Life in College*, 91.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Life in College*, 90.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Life in College*, 90.

⁷¹ Emerson, *Essential Writings*, 237.

⁷² Quoted in Vining, *Friend of Life*, 92–93.

⁷³ Emerson, *Essential Writings*, 132.

natural world that would have resonated with Jones' belief that nature kept him spiritually safe. Emerson at times comes close to pantheism though, for example when he declares that 'Standing on the bare ground – my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space ... I am part or parcel of God.'⁷⁴ In 'Spiritual Laws', Emerson encourages his readers to 'draw a lesson from nature, which always works by short ways. When the fruit is ripe, it falls. When the fruit is despatched, the leaf falls.'⁷⁵ Jones uses a similar analogy to describe his approach to influencing Quakers with whom he did not agree: 'I felt convinced that there was no legitimate way to shake off the dry, dead leaves of these old theological opinions until the deeper life of the soul itself was awakened, which would in time produce its own fresh and vital truth of experience and quietly push off the desiccated variety.'⁷⁶ Indeed, this is possibly one example of Jones' admission that 'the effect of that long and intimate study of Emerson left its touch, unnoticed at the time, on my use of English and my way of putting things'.⁷⁷

It is worth noting one important difference between the Transcendentalists and traditional Quaker thought. In 1889, Jones had drawn attention to the 'immense' difference between the Quaker conviction that there is nothing in human nature that can lead to salvation and the Transcendentalist view that the 'God-given teacher' is a '*natural* endowment of the human mind', and there is no suggestion that he wishes to diverge from the traditional Quaker formulation.⁷⁸ As we will see in later chapters, however, in *Social Law* Jones was confidently decrying the traditional Quaker view as psychologically inadequate and embracing a position that was, in fact, congruent with that of the Transcendentalists.

⁷⁴ Emerson, *Essential Writings*, 6.

⁷⁵ Emerson, *Essential Writings*, 175.

⁷⁶ Jones, *Middle Years*, 99.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Life in College*, 91.

⁷⁸ R. M. Jones, *Eli and Sybil Jones: Their life and Work* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1889), 301 (italics as in original).

In summary, then, Emerson and Jones shared what might be termed a mystical orientation that was informed by the Romantic poets and aspects of Quakerism. Jones gained two important concrete ideas from Emerson: the conviction that Quakerism was a mystical religion, and the concept of the Oversoul as an expression of the relationship between humans and God. More nebulously, Jones seems to have assimilated Emerson's style of writing, a style that was informed and lucid and that appealed to the heart. The next individual to be considered knew both Jones and Emerson: the so-called 'Quaker poet', John Greenleaf Whittier.

2.2.4 Quaker mysticism: John Greenleaf Whittier

Outside Quakerism, the poet Whittier (1807–1892) is perhaps best known for his hymns. *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind*, with lines such as 'Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire / O still, small voice of calm', for example, epitomises the guidance received through the listening silence that is sought in a Quaker Meeting. For Whittier, this guidance resulted in a vigorous fight for the abolition of slavery, in which he combined lobbying politicians and public speaking with poetry and writing. Jones praised Whittier as 'a profoundly mystical person, dwelling deep, listening acutely to the inward voice', and with 'a burning moral passion' for the enlargement of human freedom.⁷⁹

Jones admits that he did not immediately recognize the significance of Whittier's poetry, despite the fact that he was a close family friend. Poems such as 'The Meeting' and 'Eternal Goodness' eventually put Jones 'in living touch with his spiritual world', however, and by his final year in Haverford, Whittier was one of his 'chosen guides'.⁸⁰ Jones met him in about 1887, by which time Whittier was frail and elderly but 'rich in spiritual insight'.⁸¹ Whittier reminisced about his friendship with Emerson, and the two discussed the poetry of Emerson and Lowell.

⁷⁹ R.M. Jones, *A Poet's Faith* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1948), 27.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Life in College*, 85.

⁸¹ Jones, *Life in College*, 169.

In his 1948 pamphlet *A Poet's Faith*, Jones gives some indications of what he found attractive about Whittier. He appreciated Whittier's conviction that science could not disprove religion because the latter was experiential: at an address at Haverford, Whittier had insisted that 'a Quaker college can have no occasion to renew the disastrous quarrel of religion with science ... No possible investigation of natural facts; no searching criticism of letter and tradition can disturb [faith], for it has its witness in all human hearts.'⁸² Jones also recognized that Whittier managed to hold together the 'yeasty doctrine of immanence in sane balance with the equally important fact of transcendence'.⁸³ Indeed, Whittier told Jones that he had criticized Emerson for letting his emphasis on the immanence of God drift towards pantheism.

What is significant about Whittier is that he weaves together many of the themes that have been touched on above. He was a lifelong friend of Eli Jones and of Jones' mother, so he understood rural Quaker life and had first-hand experience of the spiritual atmosphere of Meetings. Like Woolman, he valued both silence and action. Like Drummond, he believed that there was no argument between science and religion. Like Emerson and the Romantic poets, he strove to express spiritual truths and experiences through poetry. Unlike Emerson, however, he resisted pantheism. It is not surprising, then, that Jones extolls Whittier in *Social Law* as 'in modern times the finest interpreter of the inner meaning of Quakerism'.⁸⁴

2.2.5 The Christian tradition: Clement of Alexandria

One final figure whose influence is apparent in Jones' thought is Clement of Alexandria. Jones refers to him in *Middle Years* as 'one of my most loved religious

⁸² Jones, *A Poet's Faith*, 19.

⁸³ Jones, *A Poet's Faith*, 19.

⁸⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 193.

guides', and in 1910 he published a selection of Clement's writings.⁸⁵ Clement was born *ca.* 150, probably in Athens, where he studied philosophy. During his subsequent travels he discovered Christianity, converted, and settled in Alexandria, the then intellectual centre of the Roman world. He became a teacher at the Catechetical School in about 180, numbering Origen amongst his pupils, and produced three important works: *Protrepticis (Exhortation)*, *Paedagogus (Tutor)* and *Stromateis (Miscellanies)*. He died between 211 and 215. Jones' Introduction to Clement's writings gives some insight into the ways in which Clement's thought resonated with his own, the most notable of which are as follows.

Relevance to the present day. Clement aimed to present Christianity in a way the educated Greek world in Alexandria found acceptable.⁸⁶ Twentieth century liberals were likewise trying to make their message relevant to their own generation, a similarity not lost on Jones: '[Clement] did in his century what we are trying to do now. He expressed the Christian message in terms of prevailing thought.'⁸⁷

Universal inspiration. Clement is known for drawing on non-Christian poets and philosophers.⁸⁸ As Jones puts it, 'He makes no distinction between sacred and profane literature, divine and secular writings ... Homer and Isaiah, Heraclitus and St. John, alike bear witness in his pages to the presence of an immortal Divine Word, breathing through men and guiding the race.'⁸⁹ Jones, as we have seen, likewise believed poetry to be inspired and to reveal God. These first two characteristics of Clement are, then, consistent with Jones' desire to produce a synthesis of Christianity and modern thought.

⁸⁵ Jones, *Middle Years*, 117. R.M. Jones, *Selections from the Writings of Clement of Alexandria* (London: Headley Brothers, 1910).

⁸⁶ K. Ware and A. Louth, 'Clement of Alexandria', in *Journey to the Heart: Christian Contemplation through the Centuries*, ed. K. Nataraja (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011), 35.

⁸⁷ Jones, *Clement*, 7.

⁸⁸ Ware and Louth, 'Clement', 36.

⁸⁹ Jones, *Clement*, 14.

Incarnation. Jones interprets Clement as believing that ‘The Incarnation was the breaking forth *in a definite Person* of the God who had through all previous history been an immanent Word and who had all along been preparing for such a consummation’.⁹⁰ As we will see in Chapter 6, Jones agreed, claiming that Christ ‘is a revelation here in time and mutability of the eternal nature and character of that conscious personal Spirit that environs all life and that steers the entire system of things’.⁹¹

Sin. Clement’s treatment of sin is ‘characteristically Greek’, says Jones, and it ‘lacks the tragic depth of the Hebrew or the Augustinian diagnosis of it ... it is failure to realise the goal of our true being.’⁹² Jones view of sin was similar, as we will see in Chapter 5, and in fact he was often accused of not taking sin seriously enough.

Salvation (the harmonized man). Clement’s view of salvation is related to deification (*theosis*), a concept that originated with him.⁹³ Salvation for Clement is not, explains Kallistos Ware, a change in our juridical status through imputed righteousness, nor does it mean imitating Christ through moral effort. Rather, salvation means that we share in the life and power of God. We do not become God, as there is still a distinction between the uncreated God and created human beings, but our sharing in the life of God results in inner transformation. Jones likewise insists that salvation is something we experience. He frequently draws on Clement’s term the ‘harmonized man’ to express this process of transformation (although as far as I am aware, he never uses the term deification). It is a ‘profound conception’, says Jones: ‘the entire self must be won to holy ends until goodness becomes natural and habitual’, a point I return to in Chapter 5.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Jones, *Clement*, 16 (italics as in the original).

⁹¹ R. M. Jones, *The Inner Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1917) 162.

⁹² Jones, *Clement*, 17.

⁹³ Ware & Louth, ‘Clement’, 43.

⁹⁴ Jones, *Clement*, 19.

The human–divine relationship. Throughout his corpus, Jones uses Clement’s phrase ‘mutual and reciprocal correspondence’ to describe the relationship between humans and God.⁹⁵ He explores this correspondence from a number of angles, although he does not always use the term explicitly. For example, on the basis of idealism (see Chapter 4) he concludes that there is a correspondence between an object and the observing subject, and because God is the source of consciousness, this means that there is a profound correspondence between humans, God and the world of objects.⁹⁶ Most importantly, however, Jones’ view of the Inner Light (see Chapter 7) has at its heart the idea that humans and God are in this mutual and reciprocal correspondence. For Clement, as noted above, there was a difference between created humans and the uncreated God. But for Jones, as we will see, his use of psychology and idealism meant that this difference was blurred.

Nous. Clement, in bringing together Greek thought and Christianity, associates Plato’s concept of *nous* (soul) with the *imago Dei*. It is the fact that we have something in common with God, that we are made in God’s image, that enables us to have communion with God, as according to Greek thought ‘only like can know like’.⁹⁷ Jones insists that conceptions of the Inner Light that see God and humans as separate mean that God remains ‘forever unknowable to human consciousness except by miracle’. He does not, however, refer to the *imago Dei*; rather, it is a sharing of consciousness with the divine that means that God can be known. This again means that he cannot separate God and humans in the way that Clement does.⁹⁸

Good works. Jones emphasizes that for Clement there is no schism between faith and works, because Clement holds that ‘faith is the beginning of action’.⁹⁹ We will

⁹⁵ See e.g. Jones, *Social Law*, 204.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Jones, *Social Law*, 64

⁹⁷ Ware & Louth, ‘Clement’, 46.

⁹⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 175, 173.

⁹⁹ Jones, *Clement*, 22.

see this idea reappearing in Jones' view of 'affirmation mysticism', namely that the experience of God is not an end in itself but a means of gaining strength and vision for service.

In summary, Jones saw in Clement someone who had aims similar to his own, namely of making Christianity relevant to his generation and embracing the best of human knowledge. Furthermore, Clement's concepts of the 'harmonized man' and 'mutual and reciprocal correspondence' were in line with Jones' ideas about transformation and the Inner Light, as will become apparent in later chapters. There is, though, an important theological difference underlying these latter two points of similarity, in that Clement, unlike Jones, maintained a distinction between created humans and uncreated God.

Conclusion

The Quaker influences on Jones' childhood reverberated throughout his life, contributing to his *experiential basis*. His family's daily practice of silence and weekly pattern of attending Quaker Meeting were more than mere rituals – they fostered his intuitive sense of what he took to be God's presence. Furthermore, his family and school teachers offered an interpretation of this experience in terms of a biblical view of God and of the Quaker insistence that there was 'that of God' in everyone. In particular, his Aunt Peace and Uncle Eli convinced him by their example that God could be encountered within and guided individuals, and that this guidance needed to be married to human effort to act for the good of others. What would also prove to be important was that the Quaker community to which he belonged enabled Jones to appreciate the wisdom of the Bible while being open to the discoveries of science.

At Haverford, Jones expanded his intellectual horizons, but in a way that would strengthen, rather than weaken, his Quaker inheritance. His education was broad,

encompassing poetry, Christian history, science and mysticism. As we will see in more detail in later chapters, this breadth of knowledge is apparent in *Social Law* as he synthesizes aspects of the Oversoul of Emerson, the spiritual nature of humans found in the Romantic poets, and the 'mutual and reciprocal correspondence' of Clement with the Quaker concept of the Inner Light. Furthermore, his conviction that science revealed God meant that he would in due time interpret this concept in terms of James' psychology.

Many of the individuals who influenced Jones were not unequivocally Christian though. The Transcendentalists and Romantic poets emphasized an experiential relationship with the divine that was often mediated by nature rather than by Christ, and that at times verged on pantheism. Jones uncritical acceptance of these views is an example of his *theological naivety* and, as will become clearer in later chapters, contributed to his *multivalent theism*. Moreover, he embraced those elements of Clement's theology that emphasized the close relationship between humans and God, but neglected the elements that differentiated between the Creator and the created, an approach that contributed to the divergence of his views from the core of conviction.

It is also notable that Jones' spiritual awareness, so evident in his childhood, continued to develop at Haverford. 'The certainty of God as the stupendous fact of the Universe was steadily rising in my soul' he writes, 'I finished college not on "the shining tablelands to which God Himself is moon and sun," but with my feet on the road toward that tableland. I could at least say "Abba, Father," and I could live henceforth confident that Love works, and works triumphantly, at the Heart of Things.'¹⁰⁰ While in one sense Jones was fortunate that his intellectual and spiritual development were mutually enriching, and it was undoubtedly this symbiosis that gave his writing such conviction, it is perhaps surprising that there is not more of a

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *Life in College*, 135–136.

sense of struggle when the two did not cohere: he certainly struggles over the apparent clash between science and religion, but with a few exceptions he does not seem to have struggled unduly over the problem of evil, for example.¹⁰¹

In brief, this chapter has considered the major intellectual and spiritual influences at work throughout Jones' childhood and youth. I have suggested that his intuitive awareness of God's presence was nurtured and given an intellectual framework first by Quaker relatives and teachers and then through the books he encountered at Haverford, but that crucially not all aspects of this framework were congruent with the core of conviction. As we will see in the next chapter, his quest to find a representation of the universe that fitted his spiritual disposition continued apace when he encountered various psychological, philosophical and social strands of the optimistic liberal theology that characterized the turn of the 20th century.

¹⁰¹ See e.g. Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 40 for a brief comment on Jones' reaction as a child to an act of arson. Like many liberals, he was sobered by two world wars and in 1943 acknowledged that evil existed but that he could not explain it (Vining, *Friend of Life*, 107).

Chapter 3

Encounters with modern thought

We must perforce live in our world, and our view of God must fit our entire system of thought.¹

The years following Jones' graduation from Haverford were theologically tumultuous, with liberal theologians insisting that claims to truth should be made on the basis of reason, modern knowledge and experience rather than on ecclesiastical or scriptural authority. Quaker responses to this new theological paradigm were diverse. While some recognized the need to embrace 'modern thought' if they were to retain young, educated Quakers and eagerly grasped what they saw as a God-given opportunity to dispense with incorrect doctrine, others vehemently rejected change in favour of traditional biblically based formulations of faith. In addition, developments in psychology were raising questions about the nature of religious experience and the existence of God, and the prevailing philosophy of idealism was compatible with a universe grounded in an 'ultimate consciousness' that was not straightforwardly identified with the loving Father of Christianity. It is Jones' engagement with these momentous developments that is the focus of this chapter.

I identify three key milestones related to modern thought between Jones' student days at Haverford and the publication of *Social Law*. The first, discussed in Section 3.1, is the seminal Quaker conference held in Manchester in 1895, which set British

¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 32–33.

Quakerism on a course that embraced both liberalism and modernism. Although Jones did not attend, his meeting with John Wilhelm Rowntree two years later convinced him that Quakerism had to be brought in line with modern thought if it was to survive. The second, discussed in Section 3.2, is his discovery of William James. Jones stumbled on *Principles of Psychology* in a local library in the early 1890s, already convinced that psychology was the best way to study mysticism, and there are several passages in *Social Law* where Jones appears to have drawn on *Principles*. Psychology was an emerging discipline at the time, however, with many psychologists, including James, investigating psychic phenomena such as spiritualism and crystal-gazing as a window into the subconscious. It was James' metaphysical speculation related to the subconscious in *Varieties*, namely that we all partake in a 'more' beyond the subconscious, that would influence Jones' reformulation of the Inner Light. The third, discussed in Section 3.3, is his year of postgraduate study (1900/01) at Harvard. It was here that Jones encountered the philosopher Josiah Royce and the ethicist G. H. Palmer and absorbed much of the material and the framework of idealism found in *Social Law*.

This chapter thus covers a lot of ground. My aim is merely to draw attention to some of the key ideas related to modernism, psychology and idealism that are apparent in *Social Law* and to indicate where they had the potential to diverge from the core of conviction. The chapter completes the groundwork for the detailed analysis of Jones' thought in the rest of the thesis.

3.1 The Manchester Conference

The well-attended Manchester Conference of 1895 would mark the beginning of the so-called Quaker Renaissance, characterized by the Society's increasing engagement with modern thought and an emphasis on mysticism and social

engagement.² In his analysis of the conference, Martin Davie notes that of the 139 contributions, 25 were evangelical in tone and 22 liberal.³ The latter had the following characteristics: (1) recognition that religion should adapt to fit the changing patterns of contemporary thought; (2) acceptance of Darwinian evolution; (3) acknowledgment that it was impossible to reconcile a literal reading of the early chapters of Genesis with advances in scientific knowledge; (4) acceptance of the results achieved by Biblical criticism; (5) acceptance that the historical investigation of the gospels in the 19th century had resulted in a greater knowledge of Jesus as a historical figure; (6) an emphasis on the immanence of God; and (7) a belief that theology had ultimately to be based on an appeal to immediate experience of God (appeals to the Bible and miracles were no longer credible).

My particular interest here is how contributors treated the relationship between 'science' (which they referred to in a very general and monolithic sense) and Quakerism. In order to gain some traction on this issue, I make use of the categories proposed by Ian Barbour in the 1960s, which are well known in the field of science and religion. That is, the relationship between science and religion can be classified as conflict, integration, independence or dialogue.⁴ Briefly, the conflict model sees science and religion as almost at war, for example setting interpretations of Genesis as literally true against theories of evolution. The independence model sees science and religion as having their own distinct fields of enquiry: in the often-cited terminology of the palaeontologist Stephen Jay Gould, they are 'nonoverlapping magisteria'.⁵ The dialogue model sees science and religion as engaged in a conversation that leads to enhanced mutual understanding. Finally, the integration

² For a discussion see M. Stanley, *Practical Mystic: Religion, Science and A. S. Eddington* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 17–23.

³ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 67–72.

⁴ For a discussion of Barbour's categories, see A. E. McGrath, *Science and Religion: A New Introduction* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2010), 45–50.

⁵ McGrath, *Science and Religion*, 2.

model resists the idea that the universe has sharply defined 'spiritual' and 'physical' components, insisting that explanations must encompass both.

The Manchester session of interest here is that entitled 'The Attitude of the Society of Friends towards Modern Thought', presided over by Thomas Hodgkin on the evening of 13 November. Although the ensuing discussion was lively, with some delegates emphatically disagreeing with the general stance of the predominantly liberal/modernist speakers, the liberal/modernist agenda prevailed in the years to follow and is central to *Social Law*.

3.1.1 'The Attitude of the Society of Friends towards Modern Thought'

In his introductory paper, Hodgkin noted that the subject under discussion was 'The Relation of Quakerism to Modern Thought', clarifying that Quakerism was to be understood as 'that mode of apprehending Christianity in which the Society of Friends has differed from other churches', and that 'modern thought' comprised aestheticism, pessimism, socialism and scientism.⁶ He made two points about scientism. First, that George Fox and Quakers since have, under the influence of the 'Spirit of Christ Himself', refused to call the Bible 'The Word of God', so can offer this mode of interpretation to those troubled by the clashes between science and Scripture. He was thus aligning himself with the wider Christian liberal attitude to Scripture, but motivated by Quaker tradition as much as by an openness to science. Second, that although science may change the way we think about the universe, it would not change the way we thought about its Maker. Here Hodgkin is illustrating Barbour's category of independence, because science will not affect our view of God.

This attitude of independence was also apparent, albeit for different reasons, in the next speaker. J. Bevan Braithwaite was the evening's lone evangelical contributor and advised Quakers to concentrate on practical holiness and to 'put a check upon

⁶ *Report of the Proceedings of the Conference in Manchester* (London: Headley Brothers, 1895), Paper by Thomas Hodgkin, 203–208.

many curious but unprofitable enquiries'.⁷ Braithwaite is implicitly advocating 'independence', by assuming that living a good life and forming a holy character would not be aided by science.

The next speaker, the biblical scholar J. Rendel Harris, was in contrast adamant that science and religion could not be separated. Human development, he explained, involves intellectual and emotional growth. It is not 'an atrophy of the intellect in the interest of emotions, nor a fossilizing of the heart in order for a more close study of the universe'.⁸ Furthermore, false science led to false doctrine. Harris illustrated this with respect to a statement of the 19th century Quaker reformer Elias Hicks, who claimed that God loved all people equally and placed them in the same condition as 'our first parents'. Modern man knows we never had a first parent, Harris objected, so insisting on this doctrine in opposition to science might cause people to doubt the rest of Hicks' statement, namely the love of God. He concluded by urging Quakers to embrace science, assuring them that suspicion of modern thought belonged 'more to the clergy than to a Society like our own'. Doing so, he confidently proclaimed, would bolster Quaker credibility, redeem the Society from the 'reproach of conservative timidity' and set Quakers in their rightful place amongst the intellectual forces of the world. Harris, then, is advocating Barbour's category of dialogue as a way to make faith and doctrine credible.

The physicist Silvanus P. Thompson followed Harris by asking 'Can a scientific man be a sincere Friend?' The answer was 'yes', and in fact the practice of science and the plain speech favoured by Quakers reinforced one another, in that 'the habit of accurate thought and speech, of letting yea mean yea and no more, which is characteristic of Friends, is one that the scientific method tends ever to strengthen'.⁹ Echoing Harris, he too thought that 'modern thought will clear away only the human error that has grown up around divine truth'. Crucially, though,

⁷ *Manchester Conference*, Paper by J Bevan Braithwaite, 210–217.

⁸ *Manchester Conference*, Paper by J. Rendel Harris, 219–225.

⁹ *Manchester Conference*, Paper by Silvanus P. Thompson, 227–239.

science has its limits. Thompson insisted that ‘To every man there comes a consciousness, not to be analysed in the test-tube of the chemist, nor probed with the scalpel of the physiologist, not to be touched by the syllogism of the critic, nor disposed of by the reading of a codex, a consciousness of something quite other than those things which are to be apprehended by the physical senses.’ Thompson is thus proposing integration at the methodological level, dialogue at the epistemic level, but independence when it came to experience of God or spiritual values.

In the final paper, John William Graham stressed that the religious world now viewed the ‘Indwelling Voice as its central conception’.¹⁰ Quakerism had always held this position, he proudly asserted, so ‘holds the future in the hollow of its hand’. He too held that Scripture is not infallible – even though in practice it excels all other books, its mechanical infallibility has ‘nothing to rest on but the ill-formed views of the bishops of the early centuries’. Graham also touched on how God interacted with the world: ‘In contemplating Divine Providence, a modern religion regards it as constant, not as occasional ... The fatal result of claiming “Special” Providence is to banish God from the other 99% of causation.’ Here Graham is perhaps veering towards pantheism or at least panentheism. Although he does not develop his ideas, he might be expected to fall in the category of integration regarding how God interacts with the world, because God is involved in physical processes.

In summary, all the liberal speakers at the Manchester Conference embraced science. Views on the relationship between science and Quakerism encompassed independence, dialogue and integration, in various forms. The potential conflicts between science and religion were resolved on the one hand by giving authority to ‘science’, which was treated as a homogeneous, fixed entity, and on the other by claiming that Quakers had never viewed the Bible as infallible.

¹⁰ *Manchester Conference*, Paper by John William Graham, 240–246.

The recorded comments to the papers reveal a marked diversity of opinions among the audience. One anonymous Friend objected strenuously that 'I feel concerned to utter my earnest protest against the views uttered here tonight. It seems to me that this Conference, representing London Yearly Meeting, cannot do justice to itself without placing on record a protest.'¹¹ Although the complaints are general rather than specific, it seems likely that the consternation felt by some centred on the criticism of Scripture (this is certainly the case in letters to Jones; see my Chapter 9). Such was the strength of feeling that it was decided to delay further discussion until the next day. When the appointed time came, however, the clerk explained that to extend the discussion would interfere with the programme, and compromised by writing a minute, namely 'We think it desirable that it should be distinctly understood, as applicable to all the sittings of the Conference, that it assumes no responsibility for the opinions expressed in any of the papers read before it.'¹²

It is against this backdrop of these diverse, strongly held opinions that *Social Law* was written, so we now turn to look at Jones' response to the conference.

3.1.2 Jones' response

Jones did not attend the conference but was informed of what had happened in a letter from Henry Newman, editor of the British Quaker journal *The Friend*.

Newman wrote that it was the first serious attempt of the Society to come to terms with modern thought and a vital effort to retain 'highly educated & intelligent young men and women belonging to our best old Quaker families' who were 'drifting theologically'.¹³ Many American Quakers were still ignorant of the challenges posed by new developments in higher criticism and modern scientific thought, Newman suggested, and he urged Jones, in his position as editor of *The*

¹¹ *Manchester Conference*, 247.

¹² *Manchester Conference*, 248.

¹³ Henry Stanley Newman, 25 November 1895, HC Box 1 [see Appendix C].

American Friend, to make full use of the double number of the conference issue of *The Friend* that he was sending.

Jones' involvement in the drive for modernism did not start in earnest until a few years later though, when he met John Wilhelm Rowntree on a walking holiday in Switzerland. The two very quickly realized that they had similar aims for reforming Quakerism and formed a deep and enduring friendship. Jones invested considerable energy over the coming decades in promoting the liberal/modernist agenda through journal articles, summer schools and the ambitious seven-volume Rowntree history of Quakerism¹⁴ in collaboration with British Quakers such as Rowntree (to whom *Social Law* is dedicated), Charles Braithwaite (who contributed to the Rowntree series) and Edward Grubb (a teacher and Quaker writer).

Many of the ideas about the relationship between science and Christianity in Jones' writings bear the imprint of ideas expressed at Manchester. For example, the category of dialogue expressed in the conviction that religious doctrine should be subject to science lies at the root of *Social Law*, and we will see in Chapter 7 that Jones appealed to the authority of psychology as evidence that Barclay's view of the Inner Light was false. At times, however, this dialogue gave way to a relationship of independence. In a passage redolent of Thompson's address, Jones writes that 'We do not surrender love and sympathy, goodness and patience, because we cannot dig them up with a pick or find them under the microscope.'¹⁵

Hodgkin's neutral observation that science would not alter the way we thought about God was recast in a more positive light by Jones though: for Jones, as for Drummond, the study of nature added to our knowledge of the glory of God.¹⁶ Indeed, at times Jones moves towards 'integration', in that his belief that there is a

¹⁴ Southern, 'Rowntree History Series'.

¹⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 42–43.

¹⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 10.

Person at the heart of the Universe (see Chapter 4) means that the insights of psychology reflect spiritual laws.

Finally, whereas Braithwaite suggested that Quakers should concentrate on practical holiness rather than ‘unprofitable enquiries’, *Social Law* was written under the assumption that engagement with psychology, far from being unprofitable, was essential for those troubled by the apparent clash between psychology and faith.

It should also be noted that Jones’ alignment with British, rather than prominent American, Quakers reflects the fact that the liberal/modernist strand would become dominant in Britain but not in America. In part this seems to have been because of the stronger hold of evangelical forms of Quakerism in America. (As noted in Chapter 1, while American Meetings accepted the evangelically flavoured Richmond Declaration of Faith, London Yearly Meeting rejected it.) The evangelical criticism of the liberal approach in America is summed up well by William Pinkham in a 1904 article in *The American Friend*. Dubbing the New Theology a ‘grouping of heresies long since discarded by the Church of Christ because contrary to the teachings of Scripture’, his complaint covers many of the issues that will be raised in subsequent chapters so is worth quoting at length:

In the name of evolution it denies the fall of man; and in the name of Higher Criticism it denies the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. It stands diametrically opposed to the doctrine of a substitutionary atonement, to a resurrection after physical death, to a personal return of our Lord, and to a collective judgement. It makes inspiration a product of human consciousness, rather than a supernatural revelation to that consciousness. It sits in judgement upon the statements of Scripture, and accepts or modifies them at will.¹⁷

¹⁷ W. P. Pinkham, ‘Quakerism – radical and persistent’, *The American Friend* 8th Month 25 (1904): 560.

Jones was clearly frustrated by this attitude, accusing American Quakers of timidity and 'obscurantism', namely failing to admit 'the unpleasant facts that threaten disaster to ancient pet doctrines'.¹⁸

In summary, Jones' approach to the relationship between Christianity and psychology, like that of the Manchester speakers in relation to Quakerism and 'science' more generally conceived, encompasses dialogue, independence and integration. The question of authority in this relationship will prove to be important, as we will see in subsequent chapters. Both the Manchester speakers and Jones gave authority to 'science' over 'Scripture'. However, the recognition that spiritual experiences captured something of worth about the universe but were outside the remit of science suggests that experience could in some circumstances trump both science and Scripture as a source of authority.

This already complex multi-faceted relationship was complicated even further, as we will now see, by the fact that psychology was not an established edifice but a shifting and developing field that itself incorporated a range of religious, scientific and metaphysical suppositions.

3.2 Christian and Quaker responses to psychology

While studying in Europe at age 24, Jones wrote to his fiancée Sallie Coutant that 'My interest in mysticism had been steadily growing and deepening, and now I saw that the best approach to an understanding of this great human experience was to be found in philosophy and psychology.'¹⁹ About 15 years later, while this conviction is apparent in practice in the way he used psychology in *Social Law*, Jones' assessment of psychology as a whole is more guarded: he acknowledges in the Introduction that 'There is no religious view or practice so sacred that it does

¹⁸ Jones, *Middle Years*, 61–62.

¹⁹ Quoted in Vining, *Friend of Life*, 54.

not sooner or later find itself summoned into the sanctum of the psychologist, where it is calmly asked by what right it continues to survive.²⁰

Jones' shift in attitude arose partly because psychology, compared with, say, the physical sciences, has a particularly close but complex and multi-faceted relationship with religion/spirituality. As we will see, some psychologists used their research to argue for the existence of or to reveal the character of God, while others were convinced that psychology would show religion to be an outdated stage in human development.

The shift was also precipitated by the fact that psychology was a new field, still seeking to define itself. At the end of the 19th century, the increasing scientific respectability of psychology as reflected in its adoption of the laboratory and academic journals has to be seen in relation to what Eugene Taylor terms its 'shadow culture', namely a preoccupation with psychic phenomena such as crystal-gazing, mesmerism and spiritualism.²¹ This preoccupation was epitomized by William James, and the key point that will emerge later in this thesis is that James' metaphysical speculations resulting from his research into psychic phenomena found their way into *Social Law*.

In this section, I first give a brief and broad overview of the early years of psychology, looking at its relationship with psychic phenomena and its reception within the Church. I then narrow the focus to look more specifically at the Quaker response to William James, and then narrow it even further to make some preliminary remarks about the relationship between Jones and James.

²⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 13.

²¹ See E. Taylor, *Shadow Culture: Psychology and Spirituality in America* (Washington DC: Counterpoint, 1999), Chapter 8.

3.2.1 Psychology, psychic phenomena and the Christian response

3.2.1.1 Psychology and psychic phenomena

Pre-scientific psychology in universities took place in philosophy departments.²² From the 17th century, students typically linked the physical and mental worlds by considering the thought of Kant, Locke and Hume on sensation and perception in relation to knowledge. In the late 19th century, this philosophical framework was married to experimental physiology, a new science that showed that psychological processes could be measured.²³ Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894), for example, carried out experiments to measure the speed of the nervous impulse, and Ernst Heinrich Weber (1795–1878) asked subjects to hold two similar weights in order to determine the ‘just noticeable difference’ between them, thereby showing that the physical and psychological worlds were not the same. These developments required equipment, which in turn led to a need for laboratories. Thus, the dating of the origin of scientific psychology, or the ‘new psychology’, is associated with the establishment of the first psychological research laboratory – that of Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig, Germany in 1879. In America, the first laboratory was established at John Hopkins University in 1883, and by 1900 there were 40 more.²⁴ The laboratory at John Hopkins was founded by G. Stanley Hall, a prominent Christian psychologist who had studied at Union Theological Seminary before gaining his PhD under James.²⁵ Hall went on to strengthen the position of psychology as a respectable scientific discipline by founding the *American Journal of Psychology* in 1887 and the American Psychological Association in 1892.

²² See L. T. Benjamin, Jr, *A Brief History of Modern Psychology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), Chapter 1; D. E. Leary, ‘German idealism and the development of psychology in the nineteenth century’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 18 (1980): 299–317.

²³ For a discussion of the types of measurements that were used, see R. D. Tweney & C. A. Budzynski, ‘The scientific status of American psychology in 1900’, *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 1014–1017.

²⁴ L. T. Benjamin, Jr ‘The psychological laboratory at the turn of the 20th century’, *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 318–321.

²⁵ See e.g. V. H. Kemp, ‘G. Stanley Hall and the Clark school of religious psychology’, *American Psychologist* 47 (1992): 290–298.

The desire for scientific respectability, though, was in tension with the prevailing fascination with psychic phenomena. In the 1880s, magnetic healers, phrenologists, hypnotists and mediums abounded, especially in Boston, and were much in demand for consultations. In 1885, the American Society for Psychical Research was established to investigate their claims. Hall was a founder member, as was James, who headed the Committee on Hypnotism and the Committee to Investigate Mediumistic Phenomena. James added a Ouija board and hypnotizer to his laboratory equipment, commandeered Harvard undergraduates for extensive studies into hypnosis, crystal-gazing and automatic writing, and spent many years investigating the celebrated Boston medium Leonora Piper.²⁶ Some psychologists hoped to prove that 'psychics' were fraudulent, and in so doing founded a subdiscipline of psychology on deception and belief. Others used their investigation into psychic phenomena to establish the reality of the subconscious, demonstrating that there are states in which it can appear as if there are invasions from another level and offering the hope that religious visions could be understood.²⁷ In the years to follow, many psychologists grew more sceptical however, coming to view psychics as frauds and James' continuing preoccupation with psychic phenomena as an embarrassment to the scientific ethos.²⁸ Hall, for example, had resigned his membership of the Society by 1890.²⁹

The relationship between psychic phenomena and organized religion was also shifting and heterogeneous. Spiritualism, for example, arose out of the experience of two adolescent Quakers: in 1848, Kate and Margaret Fox attributed the knocking they heard in their basement to a peddler who had been murdered and buried there, and, partly because they were related to prominent abolitionist Quakers in Rochester New York, the sisters soon became well known in lecture halls and

²⁶ Coon, D. J. 'Testing the limits of sense and science', *American Psychologist* 47 (1992): 143–151.

²⁷ See e.g. Taylor, *Shadow Culture*, Chapter 8.

²⁸ Benjamin, *Modern Psychology*, 12.

²⁹ Coon, 'Testing the limits', 144.

private parlours.³⁰ On the one hand, spiritualism seemed to prove that there was life after death; on the other, some Christians objected that the claim of a pleasant afterlife for everyone was inconsistent with Christianity.³¹ A further example is the 'New Thought' or 'Mind-cure' movement. Originating in Boston, New Thought blended elements of Christianity, Transcendentalism, Berkeley's idealism and even Hinduism.³² It held that the divine dwelt in each person and promoted psychic healing based to a large extent on positive thinking. As we will see in Chapter 9, Jones received an enthusiastic response to *Social Law* from a Quaker who was involved with the movement and saw close links between its premises and Jones' view of the Inner Light.

If the relationship between psychic phenomena and Christianity apparent from the above examples was complex, so too was the relationship between Christianity and the more 'scientific' face of psychology.

3.2.1.2 *Psychology and Christianity*

Both Christians and psychologists exhibited a broad spectrum of attitudes towards the relationship between this new science and Christianity. Broadly speaking, whereas conservative Christians dismissed it as the latest form of materialism, liberal Christians sought to use it, whether to attain liberation from sin or to understand mysterious inner forces.³³ Hall, for example, wanted to use psychology as an aid to developing virtue. Often at the forefront of explaining psychology to a general public concerned about its implications for religion, Hall discussed concepts such as self-control, moral development and the meaning of life and religion, enthusing that they were now being better understood by controlled experiments

³⁰ Coon, 'Testing the limits', 143.

³¹ Benjamin, *Modern Psychology*, 11.

³² James, *Varieties*, 94.

³³ C. G. White, *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance 1830–1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 1 and 67.

in the laboratory than by philosophers and metaphysicians.³⁴ Another psychologist falling within this category was E.W. Scripture, in charge of the laboratory at Yale, who argued in 1899 that psychology could produce a system of character building based on a careful study of how to develop virtues such as truthfulness, honesty, persistence and courage.³⁵ Of interest for this thesis is that William James felt this responsibility of psychology to facilitate self-improvement deeply, and his chapter on habit in *Principles* was popular sermon material (see Chapter 5). Many of these Christian psychologists, however, were accused of sacrificing their distinctively religious message and transforming Christianity into self-realization.³⁶

A further area of interest was whether psychology could shed any light on the existence, or otherwise, of God. Hall, for example, surmised in *Harper's Monthly* in 1894 that the new psychology provided a deep religious feeling that the world was ultimately rational.³⁷ On similar lines, James Walsh, writing in a Catholic magazine, proclaimed that evidence from the new psychology brought one face to face with the necessity of a guiding force.³⁸ And Edwin Starbuck, a Quaker psychologist who supplied much of the material for James' *Varieties* and knew Jones,³⁹ argued that psychology not only revealed God but showed that God existed: because inner dispositions can be relied upon for a true knowledge about the world, religious feelings point to the existence of an objective spiritual reality.⁴⁰

James Leuba, in contrast, took a naturalistic stance. His main critique came after *Social Law*, but Jones singles him out in the opening sentence of *New Studies in Mystical Religion* (1927), where the general assertion that 'The main attack in

³⁴ White, *Unsettled Minds*, 56.

³⁵ For a brief discussion of early attitudes to the relationship between psychology and Christianity, see W. E. Pickren, 'A whisper of salvation: American psychologists and religion in the popular press, 1884–1908', *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 1022–1024.

³⁶ White, *Unsettled Minds*, 1–2.

³⁷ Pickren, 'A whisper of salvation', 1023.

³⁸ Pickren, 'A whisper of salvation', 1023.

³⁹ Jones and Starbuck lectured together at a Quaker Summer School in 1903, see Kent, 'Psychological and mystical interpretations of early Quakerism', 269.

⁴⁰ White, *Unsettled Minds*, 151.

recent years on the validity of mysticism as a religious experience is the characteristic attack of the psychologist' comes with a specific footnote: 'See especially Leuba's *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism*'.⁴¹ Leuba had developed an admiration for the scientific method while studying for his BSc, and eventually accepted the Comtian view of religion as something that people outgrew as they came to embrace a scientific worldview.⁴² Psychology, he predicted, would dispel the belief that God intervened on behalf of humanity, and although the loss of belief might initially cause 'dismay and discouragement' its acceptance would eventually be 'for the best'.⁴³ Leuba held that belief in God arose partly from a natural human tendency to sense that somebody was present even if nobody was, a position he tried to demonstrate experimentally by blindfolding students in a thickly carpeted room and observing that they sometimes incorrectly reported that someone was with them.⁴⁴ He also asserted that when mystics yearned for God what they really wanted was self-affirmation, peace and sexual fulfilment.⁴⁵ Although he admitted that spiritual practices and experiences had a beneficial effect on the character of mystics, he assured his readers that psychotherapy provided a quicker and more reliable method that would have saved mystics a great deal of physical and spiritual suffering.⁴⁶ As we will see in Chapter 8, Jones, by contrast, took the transformed lives of mystics as proof that their religious experiences were grounded in God. The different explanations offered by Leuba and Jones illustrate the different metaphysical assumptions that underlay interpretations of psychology.

⁴¹Jones, *New Studies*, 9. Leuba and Jones must have known each other through their connection with Bryn Mawr College (a women's Quaker college with close associations with Haverford). Leuba spent his career as a lecturer there and Jones was elected chairman of the board in 1916 (Vining, *Friend of Life*, 184), but Jones makes no mention of their acquaintance as far as I am aware

⁴² D. Hay, 'Psychologists interpreting conversion: Two American forerunners of the hermeneutics of suspicion', *History of the Human Sciences* 12 (1999): 64.

⁴³ J. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925), 320.

⁴⁴ Hay, 'Psychologists interpreting conversion', 67.

⁴⁵ Note that Leuba is in line with Freud here: Freud lectured in the US in 1909, but it was not until the 1920s that his ideas became well known.

⁴⁶ Leuba, *Religious Mysticism*, 322.

This above survey has been very brief: its aim has merely been to highlight the changing and complex interdependence between psychology, psychic phenomena and Christianity at the end of the 19th century, and to show that psychologists engaged with a variety of religious questions and held a variety of religious opinions. The next subsection narrows the focus, by looking at the Quaker response to William James.

3.2.2 William James and the Quaker response

James began his academic career at Harvard in 1872 in physiology and spent the rest of his career periodically shifting between the departments of philosophy and psychology. His first major work was the mammoth two-volume *Principles of Psychology*. More than 12 years in gestation, and running to more than 1400 pages, *Principles* was published in 1890 and quickly became the leading text in America, influencing generations of psychologists.⁴⁷ It covers many aspects of psychology, from the transmission of nervous impulses to the formation of habit. James followed *Principles* with the classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) on religious psychology, covering topics such as religion and neurology, the religion of healthy-mindedness and the 'sick soul', conversion and mysticism. His other major works include and the more philosophical *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and the post-humous *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912).

Of particular interest here are James' religious views, and specifically the fact that he found himself unable to accept what he termed 'popular Christianity'.⁴⁸ A fuller account of his unorthodox beliefs can be found in Slater's book *William James on Ethics and Faith*,⁴⁹ but a few points of interest pertinent to *Social Law* can be gleaned from the Conclusion and Postscript in *Varieties*.

⁴⁷ Benjamin, *Modern Psychology*, 57–58.

⁴⁸ James, *Varieties*, 521.

⁴⁹ M. Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009).

James' religious views were influenced by his father, Henry James Senior, who believed God to be in all people equally,⁵⁰ and by Emerson, a close family friend.⁵¹ James was also an empiricist, however, and thus came to many of his conclusions based on the numerous case studies detailed in *Varieties*. He concluded that the visible world is part of a spiritual universe that gives it its chief significance,⁵² and that a man's higher part is 'conterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him' (a view that resonates with Emerson's Oversoul).⁵³ The best way to describe this 'more', he thought, was in terms of the well-accredited psychological identity of the subconscious self. Thus, 'whatever it may be on its *farther* side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life'.⁵⁴ Crucially, the 'farther' side of the 'more' did not have to be infinite or solitary. It might even, speculated James, be 'a larger and more godlike self', such that the universe might be a collection of such selves with no absolute unity realized in it at all.⁵⁵ I will return to criticisms levelled at Jones that seem to have this view at their heart in Chapter 9.

James (again like Emerson) favoured experience rather than the trappings of organized religion, claiming that, 'Churches, when once established, live at second-hand upon tradition; but the *founders* of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communion with the divine.'⁵⁶ In line with this, his definition of religion prioritized individual experience above churches: religion is 'the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the

⁵⁰ James, *Varieties*, xi.

⁵¹ Slater, *William James*, 136.

⁵² James, *Varieties*, 485.

⁵³ James, *Varieties*, 508.

⁵⁴ James, *Varieties*, 512 (*italics as in original*).

⁵⁵ James, *Varieties*, 525.

⁵⁶ James, *Varieties*, 30.

divine'.⁵⁷ It was a definition that carried with it an inescapable pluralism, as each person has a different temperament and different needs.⁵⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, though, James admitted that he himself had 'no living sense of commerce with a God', but he felt that in the experience of others he recognized truth, referring to this ability as his 'mystical *germ*'.⁵⁹

Most liberal/modernist Quakers had little hesitation in embracing James. Perhaps they saw similarities between their own views and James' egalitarian emphasis on experience, and perhaps they were encouraged by his unequivocal esteem for Quakerism: It is a religion that is 'impossible to overpraise', he had proclaimed in *Varieties*, further suggesting, in line with the tone at the Manchester Conference, that Christian liberalism was only now discovering something that Quakers had known all along.⁶⁰ John Wilhelm Rowntree seized on this endorsement in one of his essays, interpreting it as justifying the Quaker dependence on 'the inward',⁶¹ and a glowing review of *Varieties* in the Quaker journal *The British Friend* expressed the desire that it would be placed in all Meeting House libraries so that all ministers might have access to it.⁶² The review did sound a note of caution, though, perhaps implicitly acknowledging James' unorthodox beliefs in the warning that 'the final statement of the author's conclusions we must not attempt to follow', but it made no attempt to address the issue. The Quaker William Littleboy was a notable exception to this enthusiasm, worrying that *Varieties* reduced religious experience to psychology, and his concern caused Rowntree to ask Jones to backtrack on plans to invite James to lecture at a Quaker summer school.⁶³ Jones did so, but, as we will now see, had no such qualms himself.

⁵⁷ James, *Varieties*, 31.

⁵⁸ James, *Varieties*, 487.

⁵⁹ James, *Varieties*, xxiv.

⁶⁰ James, *Varieties*, 7.

⁶¹ J.W. Rowntree, 'Essays and Addresses', ed. by Joshua Rowntree (London: Headley Brothers, 1906), 102.

⁶² *British Friend*, 'A study of religious experience', October (1902): 262–263.

⁶³ Kent, 'Psychological and mystical interpretations', 256.

3.2.3 Jones' use of James' research

After graduating from Haverford, Jones travelled in Europe for a year and then took up a teaching post at Oak Grove Seminary. Although busy with administrative and teaching duties, he set apart time to study, making use of the library five miles away at Colby College.⁶⁴ It was in this library that he encountered *Principles*, exclaiming in his memoirs that 'No man with my interests could ever forget an event like that!'⁶⁵

Jones held James in exceptionally high regard throughout his life. He had a portrait of James in his study, and a few months before he died wrote in a somewhat shaky hand to his daughter that 'I am reading a wonderful book on the James family'.⁶⁶ In *Middle Years*, Jones reports that he had begun to consult James before he was a student at Harvard (1900/01), and there is evidence that they met in 1906 in the form of a brief handwritten note from James that states 'I will be glad to see you on Friday the 30th [of November] at 3.30 o'clock' (see Appendix C).⁶⁷ The correspondence was evidently both affirming and invigorating: Jones reports that James 'had the heartiest sympathy' with his interest in mysticism and devotion to Quaker ideals and that 'It was a characteristic of James to see "genius" in every young man who confided in him ... When you saw how enthusiastic this great man was over your half-born mental child, you were assured that it must be a superlative offspring.'⁶⁸

Indeed, Jones seems to have been flattered by James' attention, if name-dropping is anything to go by. The Introduction to the *Finding the Trail*, for example, proudly

⁶⁴ Jones, *Life in College*, 180.

⁶⁵ Jones, *Life in College*, 180.

⁶⁶ To Mary Jones, 21 January 1948, HC Box 60.

⁶⁷ William James, 20 November 1906, HC Box 10 [Appendix C].

⁶⁸ Jones, *Middle Years*, 7–8. Note that Jones was not alone in seeing this characteristic of James. George Santayana, another Harvard philosopher, observed that James became a friend and helper to 'those groping, nervous, half-educated, spiritually disinherited, passionately hungry individuals of which America is full.' (R. D. Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), loc. 3215, Kindle).

notes that William James 'loved' the earlier version.⁶⁹ He also rather gratuitously quotes a letter from Alice James in *Middle Years*: 'I should like to thank you for the Editorial Letter in the *American Friend* on the death of William James. Many voices have been raised in affectionate memory of a man who truly loved his kind but no one has spoken more justly or with finer appreciation than yourself.'⁷⁰

Jones used Jamesian psychology in two main ways. First, and most straightforwardly, he followed James' texts when teaching, in the face of many alternatives.⁷¹ It seems that James provided what Paley did not, namely 'spiritual nutriment for the soul', as Jones recalls seeing 'an entire class hushed with a solemn awe under the moral power of his wonderful chapter on *Habit*'.⁷²

More important here, however, is that Jones, as noted, believed that mysticism should be studied through psychology, and James was his primary source in this endeavour.⁷³ Thus, Jones used psychology to inform his conception of God (Chapter 4), to propose a meeting place of humans and God in the subconscious (Chapter 5), to give credence to the doctrine of the incarnation (Chapter 6), and to argue that Barclay's view of the Inner Light was false (Chapter 7).

In *Social Law*, Jones cites material from both *Varieties* and *Principles*. There are also a number of passages that do not have a reference but that are similar to passages from *Principles*. It is also possible that he drew on James' articles or on private discussions with him, again without references. Hedstrom claims that *Social Law* was the first significant effort to translate *Varieties* for a popular audience, but this

⁶⁹ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 9. Jones is referring to an earlier memoir, *A Boy's Religion from Memory* (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1902).

⁷⁰ Jones, *Middle Years*, 9.

⁷¹ James produced a shorter version of *Principles*, called *Psychology: A Briefer Course* (known by students as 'Jimmy'), in 1892. The Haverford file lists this as the textbook for Jones's psychology course, which he gave in 1901-1909, 1911, 1915, 1918, 1921 and 1924 (Rufus M. Jones Papers, p.262, available at www.haverford.edu/library/special/aids/rufus_jones/rmjones.xml, accessed August 2015). For information on alternative textbooks, see A. H. Fuchs, 'Teaching the introductory course in psychology circa 1900', *American Psychologist* 55 (2000): 492-495.

⁷² *American Friend* September 15 (1910): 583, quoted in Vining, *Friend of Life*, 133.

⁷³ Although he also acknowledges Baldwin in the Introduction.

is an overstatement, for at least two reasons.⁷⁴ First, the Introduction to *Social Law* states that much of the raw material was presented at the Woodbrooke and Scarborough summer schools. The latter was held in 1901, so *Social Law* must have been more than a reworking of the 1902 *Varieties*.⁷⁵ Second, although Jones did take his ideas about the subconscious from *Varieties*, a large portion of *Social Law* is about mysticism, and Jones complained in a letter to his wife that the chapter on mysticism in *Varieties* 'though good, did not satisfy me. It gave little new insight'.⁷⁶

In spite of Jones' dependence on James, there were some important difference between them. Most significantly, James' concept of the 'more' was, as noted, not a Christian one. In 1931, Jones explicitly pointed out this difference, clarifying that 'I am not here endorsing James' well-known conception of God which I do not share, I am only borrowing some of his luminous phrases to help supply vivid imagery for making God as Spirit *real* to our minds.'⁷⁷ Jones does not allude to this difference in *Social Law*, which raises the question of to what extent he recognized both the difference and its significance. The implications of this difference in relation to the Inner Light would turn out to be profound, however, as we will see in later chapters. Furthermore, in later life, made more cautious by the theories of Freud, Jones wrote that 'I went too far in my early period toward the adoption of his theories of the religious significance of the subconscious.'⁷⁸ It is notable, however, that he does not rework the ideas in *Social Law* in the light of this recognition.

There are also differences that are less significant, in the sense that they are not inherent to Jones' formulation of the Inner Light. First, Jones' experience of Quaker worship convinced him that mysticism flourished best in a group, meaning that he could never embrace James' above-quoted private and individualistic definition of

⁷⁴ Hedstrom, *Liberal Religion*, 19.

⁷⁵ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 102.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Kent, 'Psychological and mystical interpretations', 268, f/n 24.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Pathways*, 209.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Middle Years*, 8.

religion. Second, he objected to James' definition of Quakerism as a 'religion of spiritual inwardness'. On the contrary, he insisted, 'No religion can be rightly called "a religion of spiritual inwardness", as Professor James has characterized Quakerism, unless it is at the same time a religion of *spiritual outwardness*'.⁷⁹ The great Quakers in all periods, claimed Jones, have sought social transformation rather than private, inward peace and joy.⁸⁰ Jones' views on both of these issues are discussed in Chapter 8. Finally, he never accepted James' pragmatism, complaining that it came too close to 'implying that truth is something to be settled by our democratic vote'.⁸¹

In summary, Jones admired James enormously, both as a person and as a psychologist, and claimed that *Principles* was one of the most influential books he had ever read. The two men shared an interest in religious experience and a belief that the universe was fundamentally spiritual. Jones, however, identified more closely with Christianity than James. This difference was potentially incongruous with his attribution of authority to James' research in relation to the metaphysical underpinnings of the subconscious, and, as we will see in later chapters, had implications for the relationship of Quakerism to the core of conviction. James, as we will now see, however, was not the only Harvard philosopher to inspire Jones.

3.3 Lessons from Harvard: Philosophical idealism and the Social Gospel

Haverford, as noted, had close links with Harvard. Jones had originally intended to go there to study philosophy in 1889, but instead accepted the post of Principal at

⁷⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 197–198.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 200–201. Note that Jones is evidencing his preference for action here and being subjective here in not including quietist Quakers among 'the great Quakers'. For a discussion on Jones's view of Quaker Quietism, see E. Pryce, "'Negative to a marked degree" or "an intense and glowing faith"?: Rufus Jones and Quaker Quietism', *Common Knowledge* 16 (2010): 518–531.

⁸¹ Jones, *Pathways*, 14.

Oak Grove Seminary.⁸² In 1893 the opportunity arose again, and again was deferred, this time to take up the position at Haverford. Circumstances were finally favourable in 1900/01, which proved to be an exceptionally stimulating period. Jones arrived in the wake of President Charles Eliot's ambitious program of expansion, building, and academic restructuring,⁸³ and during what has been termed the Golden Age of American Philosophy: William James and Josiah Royce were engaged in vigorous but amicable philosophical sparring over the nature of God, Francis Peabody was breaking new ground by introducing social concerns to the study of theology, and George Herbert Palmer was discussing ethics in terms of the 'conjunct self'.

With James absent in Europe preparing the Gifford lectures (later published as *Varieties*), Jones settled on four courses: 'Ethics' and 'The Ethics of Idealism' with Palmer; 'Problems of Comparative and Social Psychology' with Hugo Münsterberg; and 'New Testament Interpretation' with Joseph Henry Thayer. He also audited Royce's course on 'Metaphysics' and George Santayana's on 'Greek Philosophy'.⁸⁴ Jones formed lasting friendships with Royce and Peabody, and the Introduction to *Social Law* acknowledges the influence of the Harvard trio of Royce, James and Palmer. Here I focus mainly on Josiah Royce and his brand of idealism, because of its pervasive influence in *Social Law*, but I also briefly consider his other lecturers.

3.3.1 Josiah Royce and idealism

Royce was the leading American proponent of absolute idealism, the view that all aspects of reality, including those we experience as disconnected or contradictory, are ultimately unified in the thought of a single all-encompassing consciousness, often referred to as the Absolute. It was a view that left him open to accusations of monism and pantheism. William James certainly accused him of both, and the two

⁸² Vining, *Friend of Life*, 59.

⁸³ See, for example, Richardson, *William James*, loc. 2801, Kindle.

⁸⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 86.

were known for their friendly engagement in what was termed the 'Battle of the Absolute'.⁸⁵ Royce's thought is complex. In 1900, for example, *The World and the Individual* introduced the mathematical concept of the determinate infinite to clarify the relationship of the individual to the infinite community, which in turn was associated with God. It also evolved. In 1885, Royce called universal Thought God, but the concept had little resemblance to the traditional God of Christianity, and Royce confessed to being quite indifferent to whether his view was termed Theism or Pantheism.⁸⁶ By 1895, he was insisting that his conception of God was distinctly theistic, but nonetheless his fellow philosopher Joseph Le Conte complained that 'For Professor Royce, God is Thought; conscious, indeed, but passive, powerless, passionless Thought.'⁸⁷ By the time of his Gifford lectures in 1899, however, Royce had concluded that his earlier concept 'Thought' was inadequate to express the meaning of Individuality, and was trying to reorganize his conception of God around 'Personality'.⁸⁸ A detailed analysis of Royce's work is clearly far beyond the scope of this thesis. The key point to bear in mind, however, is that his work as a whole can be seen as an attempt to understand the place of finite individuals in an infinite universe.

There is little doubt that Jones saw Royce as a particularly inspiring figure. In 'Why I enroll', he enthuses that 'Professor Josiah Royce had a larger influence on my intellectual development, I think, than any other one person'.⁸⁹ And in *Life in College* he attests that Royce's *Spirit of Modern Philosophy* 'at once took a great place in my developing thought'.⁹⁰ He stressed, however, that 'I was never [Royce's]

⁸⁵ F. M. Oppenheim, How Did William James and Josiah Royce interact philosophically? *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 16 (1999): 81–96.

⁸⁶ P. E. Johnson, 'Josiah Royce – theist or pantheist?' *Harvard Theological Review* 21 (1928): 199

⁸⁷ Le Conte's reply to Royce's 1895 essay 'The Conception of God' in J. Royce, *The Conception of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1898), 68–69.

⁸⁸ Johnson, 'Josiah Royce', 201.

⁸⁹ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 196.

⁹⁰ Jones, *Life in College*, 180.

“disciple” in the sense that I adopted his system of thought as my own, but I was powerfully stimulated by his lectures and his books, and I had the rare privilege of enjoying his friendship and personal intercourse as long as he lived.’⁹¹

It is not always possible to say where Jones was directly influenced by Royce though. The reference to the stimulation Jones found in Royce and to his friendship, combined with the scarcity of actual citations (only three in *Social Law*) suggest that perhaps Royce contributed to Jones’ overall worldview in a way that is difficult to define. Furthermore, Jones himself says that prior to Harvard he had already become deeply interested in the Neo-Hegelian position, which he had discussed with Edward Caird at Oxford, so he was ‘sympathetically prepared for Royce’s leadership’ by the time he was taught by him.⁹² Below I discuss a few points of similarity (a claim weaker than dependence, note) between Jones and Royce that are apparent in the three books of Royce that Jones mentions, and then a few points of divergence.

3.3.1.1 Similarities between Royce and Jones

In the first book that Jones came across, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (1892), there are at least three ideas in the Introduction alone that are apparent in *Social Law*. First, Royce asserts that there is ‘no beauty in a metaphysical system, which does not spring from its value as a record of a spiritual experience’,⁹³ a conviction that chimes with Jones’ view that experience of God was evidence of God’s existence (see Chapter 4). Second, Royce claims that ‘if the universe is a live thing, a spiritual reality, we, in progressing towards a comprehension of its nature, must needs first comprehend our own life’.⁹⁴ Similarly, Jones advised that ‘There is one approach to an infinite realm where God *might be*.... The true path is through

⁹¹ Jones, *Middle Years*, 5–6.

⁹² Jones, ‘Why I enroll’, 196–197.

⁹³ J. Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (New York: Dover, [1892] 1983), 23.

⁹⁴ Royce, *Modern Philosophy*, 17

personality.⁹⁵ Third, Royce asserts that the task of humanity is to organize on earth a worthy social life.⁹⁶ Similarly, Jones had always valued 'good deeds' and stressed the importance of social reform (see Chapter 8). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that *Modern Philosophy* was one of two textbooks that Jones used when teaching his 'History of Philosophy' course at Haverford.⁹⁷

In a subsequent book, *Studies of Good and Evil* (1898), Royce acknowledges his dependence on James Baldwin's 'well-known works on Mental Development in the Child and in the Race'.⁹⁸ Baldwin had developed a social theory of consciousness, essentially arguing that community is necessary for the formation of self-consciousness. Jones similarly acknowledges Baldwin in his Introduction, and in his own discussion of this subject provides a broad footnote to the effect of 'See Baldwin's "*Mental Development*" and Royce's "*Studies of Good and Evil*", pp.169–248.'⁹⁹

The ideas in *The World and the Individual* (1899–1900), originally given as the Gifford lectures between 1898 and 1900, however, seem particularly pervasive in *Social Law*. This is probably because it was this book that Jones worked through while taking Royce's course at Harvard. After nearly 1000 pages, Royce provides a no-doubt welcome summary: 'The one lesson of our entire course has thus been the lesson of the unity of finite and infinite ... of the World and all its Individuals, of the One and the Many, of God and Man'.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Jones emphasizes in his Introduction that *Social Law* is concerned mainly with 'the extent and the significance of this Divine interrelationship'.¹⁰¹ Mysticism is also a major theme in *Social Law*, and Jones recalled that during Royce's course he 'came to grips with

⁹⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 44.

⁹⁶ Royce, *Modern Philosophy*, 6.

⁹⁷ Taught in 1895–1907, 1909, 1911, 1915, 1918, 1921, 1924.

(<http://www.haverford.edu/library/special/aids/rufusjones/rmjones.xml>, p.263).

⁹⁸ J. Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil* (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), x.

⁹⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 55.

¹⁰⁰ J. Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1901), 417.

¹⁰¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 18.

[Royce's] profound treatment of mysticism as one of the major pathways to reality' but also that he greatly profited from his 'searching criticisms'.¹⁰² In comparing realism and mysticism, for example, Royce concludes that 'Both are abstractions; both, if analysed, go to pieces upon their own inner contradictions; both have had a long history; both express a fragment of the whole truth about Being.'¹⁰³

In summary, a comparison of Royce and Jones is no easy task, mainly because Royce's thought is so complex and because Jones is sparing in direct references. What can be said, though, is that they were both idealists, respected the insights of mysticism, and used social psychology to understand consciousness. In Royce, Jones had thus discovered a philosopher who would provide an intellectual framework for much of his thought. They did not, as we will now see however, agree on everything.

3.3.1.2 Why Jones was not Royce's disciple

As far as I know, Jones does not state explicitly in his books why he did not become Royce's 'disciple'. Vining, and also Dorrien citing Vining, point to 'Why I enroll', in which Jones states that monistic idealism came too close to pantheism, whereas he himself was seeking 'the line between a defeative dualism of a two-world theory and an equally dangerous pantheism'.¹⁰⁴ This point of departure is certainly plausible, especially given the above-mentioned criticisms of Royce, but against it, it is notable that Jones' complaint does not specifically refer to Royce, and also that Royce's thought was arguably less obviously pantheistic by the time Jones was at Harvard than it was initially.

There are two other possibilities, both related to the way in which Royce arrived at his conclusions. The first is that for Jones the personality of God was revealed primarily in Christ: 'in Him was exhibited the eternal patience and sacrifice and love

¹⁰² Jones, 'Why I enroll', 197.

¹⁰³ Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1900), 84.

¹⁰⁴ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 211.

of God'.¹⁰⁵ Royce, by contrast, was at times trying to deduce the character of God based on philosophical considerations.¹⁰⁶ Second, whereas Royce argued for the existence of God based on logic, Jones eschewed proofs, preferring to draw analogies from personality and quote poetry. For example, in the final chapter of *Social Law*, Jones describes the relationship of individuals to God not in terms of a Roycean mathematical proof but by quoting Dante.¹⁰⁷

Whatever the point of divergence, it is clear that Royce was indeed powerfully stimulating, and aspects of Royce's idealism are central to Jones' thought, as will become clear in the next chapter. One important aspect for Jones of the relationship between God and humans as conceptualized by Royce was its social implications. Here, the stimulation came from some of Royce's colleagues.

3.3.2 Other 'Harvard men'

3.3.2.1 Francis Greenwood Peabody

Francis Greenwood Peabody (1847–1936) was a pioneer of the Social Gospel, a movement that combined the demand for individual transformation with a call to transform society and that would become the dominant expression of Protestantism in America by the end of the first decade of the 20th century.¹⁰⁸

Jones did not study with Peabody, but they became friends, and Jones described him in a letter to Elizabeth as 'about as near perfect as any man I have ever seen and a remarkable speaker'.¹⁰⁹ Peabody wrote to Jones on the publication of *Social Law* saying 'It gives me renewed courage in my own task to find how nearly your movement of thought coincides with my own', and ending with the accolade that 'It is a happiness to feel that you are in some sort one of our Harvard men.'¹¹⁰ The

¹⁰⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 253.

¹⁰⁶ See Le Conte's criticism above.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 272.

¹⁰⁸ See S. Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁹ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 88.

¹¹⁰ Francis Peabody, 12 December 1904, HC Box 8.

coincidence of thought to which Peabody refers is especially apparent regarding the link between mysticism and action.

Peabody's own interest in mysticism was almost certainly kindled by Emerson – he had embraced Transcendentalism when attending graduate lectures by Emerson given at Harvard.¹¹¹ He went on to join Harvard Divinity School in 1880 to lecture on ethics, approaching the subject from the point of view of practical case studies rather than metaphysics. In 1883 he was the first American theologian to introduce the subject of social reform into the divinity school curriculum, covering subjects such as temperance, charity, labour and prison discipline. His approach to these topics was not purely secular, however. For him, the mystic's insight into the divine will was the gift that kept theology fresh.¹¹²

The similarities between Peabody and Jones will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8 on mysticism. From what has already been said about Jones, however, it should be clear why he found Peabody's Social Gospel so appealing. Peabody's ideas and approach would have resonated with Jones' emphasis on action as exemplified by Eli in particular and Quakers in general, and with his interest in Transcendentalism as exemplified by Emerson. Furthermore, the Social Gospel is sometimes described as the religious expression of progressivism, a belief that it was incumbent on Christians to establish the kingdom of God on earth,¹¹³ a view that was in line with the liberal/modernist strand of Quakerism that had emerged at the Manchester Conference. This affinity with Quakerism was made clear in a 1902 Quaker review of Peabody's *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, which concluded that 'It is hardly too much to say that any minister who knowingly neglects it is neglecting his duty.'¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ For a brief overview of Peabody's life and thought, see J. Herbst, 'Francis Greenwood Peabody: Harvard's Theologian of the Social Gospel', *Harvard Theological Review* 54 (1961): 45–69.

¹¹² Herbst, 'Francis Peabody', 51.

¹¹³ Curtis, *A Consuming Faith*, 1-2.

¹¹⁴ *British Friend*, 'Christ and the Social Question' 6th month (1902): 146.

3.3.2.2 Hugo Münsterberg

The psychologist Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916) does not warrant a mention in *Middle Years*, nor in ‘Why I enroll’, which is intriguing given Jones’ interest in psychology and the use he makes of social psychology in *Social Law*. One can speculate on academic and personal reasons for this omission. From an academic point of view, Münsterberg’s general approach would have been anathema to Jones: he aimed to show that there was no such thing as free will and that even human culture was nothing but the product of automatic reactions.¹¹⁵ Jones recognized that this created problems for ethics.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Münsterberg’s psychology undermined the idea that the individual accurately perceived the world around him, or indeed was ‘master of his own house’.¹¹⁷ Here the problem is that if Münsterberg is right then there are serious problems with the insights associated with the Inner Light, because intuitions cannot necessarily be trusted. On a personal level, Münsterberg’s biographer notes wryly that ‘His adult behaviour could often be described, generously, as immature, and his career was beset by one controversy after another.’¹¹⁸ Given the warmth with which Jones eulogizes Royce and Palmer and the importance that he placed on friendship going beyond the year at Harvard, it is likely that both personal and professional affinity were missing from his relationship with Münsterberg.

3.3.2.3 George Herbert Palmer, Joseph Thayer and George Santayana

Jones discusses three other Harvard lecturers in his autobiographies. He describes George Herbert Palmer as ‘the lucid interpreter of the great ethical systems of the centuries’.¹¹⁹ Palmer utterly disapproved of mysticism and disliked the basic

¹¹⁵ M. Hale, *Human Science and Social Order: Hugo Münsterberg and the Origins of Applied Psychology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 40.

¹¹⁶ See e.g. R. M. Jones, ‘Psychology and the spiritual life’, *Journal of Religion* 1 (1922): 449–461.

¹¹⁷ Hale, *Hugo Münsterberg*, 9.

¹¹⁸ Hale, *Hugo Münsterberg*, ix.

¹¹⁹ Jones, *Middle Years*, 6.

conceptions and principles of Quakerism, but Jones recalls that he criticized what he liked to call Jones' pursuit of 'wandering fires' with a 'kindly smile'.¹²⁰ Jones took the term 'conjunct self', a term that appears many times in *Social Law*, from Palmer. Palmer used the term in relation to ethics – iniquity was for Palmer the result of setting the 'unitary self' against the conjunct. Jones, however, extended its use to describe the relationship between humans and God, suggesting that humans and God are conjunct.¹²¹ Jones likewise drew ethical implications from this relationship (see the section on sin in Chapter 5), and this may be why the Quaker scholar Howard Brinton described *Social Law* as a reworking of Palmer's ethics.¹²²

Joseph Henry Thayer is referred to as 'that fine New Testament scholar'.¹²³ He supervised Jones' thesis on the mysticism of St Paul and St John, which was later used as the basis for the final chapter in *Social Law*.¹²⁴ Of George Santayana's course, Jones notes that 'the Platonic stream of life and thought, most certainly a gulf stream which circulates through the entire history of the Western world, has been ever since one of my major interests'.¹²⁵

Jones' year at Harvard was thus a fruitful one, in which he formed life-long, significant friendships with a number of professors and embraced aspects of the modern thought that is so apparent in *Social Law*. Jones never appropriated the thought of his professors wholesale though: he took what he found to be useful and modified it in line with his Quaker-informed worldview and experience. Furthermore, although any influence from Münsterberg is speculative because of Jones' silence here, it is at least plausible that Münsterberg's reductionist approach

¹²⁰ Jones, *Middle Years*, 7.

¹²¹ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 86; for Jones' use of the term in this context, see e.g. Jones, *Social Law*, 19.

¹²² Moore, *The Ethical Thought of Rufus Matthew Jones*, 310.

¹²³ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 197.

¹²⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 88.

¹²⁵ Jones, *Middle Years*, 10.

to psychology was one of the reasons that Jones felt he had to write *Social Law*, as an attempt to defend Christianity against the 'progress of psychology'.

Conclusion

The previous chapter considered Jones' Quaker upbringing, emphasizing that by the time he graduated from Haverford, Jones was convinced that experience of God was a normal part of life, that humans and God were in mutual and reciprocal correspondence, and that good deeds were an essential component of the spiritual life and led to a transformed character. This chapter has continued the story, considering Jones' theological and philosophical development in the light of the Quaker interaction with 'modern thought', specifically his encounters at Harvard with idealism, psychology and the Social Gospel.

The story started in Manchester in 1895, with the seminal Quaker conference that set the course for the ascendancy of the liberal/modernist agenda. The liberal speakers embraced 'science' in a number of ways, for example by attributing authority to science over a literal interpretation of the Bible and comparing the scientific method with the Quaker preference for 'plain speech'. They were motivated in part by the recognition that many young, educated Quakers were, as Henry Newman put it, 'drifting theologically'. *Social Law* was aimed at a wider audience than Quakers, but, as will become apparent, it likewise attributed authority to science and was aiming to make Christianity credible to its educated but potentially troubled readers.

It is notable that both the liberal speakers at Manchester and Jones conceived of science in generalities rather than particularities, with no distinction made between different scientific enterprises and no appreciation that its findings could be revised. Furthermore, Jones was selective in attributing authority to science. On the one hand, he clearly recognized that psychology was threatening to undermine Christian

belief (this was after all one of the factors that motivated the writing of *Social Law*), but he does not view the psychology behind these challenges as authoritative. On the other, as we will see, he did attribute authority to those insights from psychology that were in line with his religious experience. This inconsistency illustrates Jones' *experiential basis*. It implies that, curiously, religious experience seems to have carried more weight than 'psychology', even though the latter was called on to defend the basis of the former.

I continued the story by considering the genesis of psychology, paying particular attention to its fuzzy boundary with investigations into psychic phenomena. The interest in this 'shadow culture' was epitomized by William James, who was held in high esteem by Liberal Quakers generally and by Jones in particular. *Social Law* draws heavily on James' ideas, which had, as will become apparent, two significant consequences. The first is that James' unorthodox religious beliefs, particularly regarding the nature of the 'more', contributed to Jones' *multivalent theism*. The second is that Jones' *reliance on psychology* meant that the inherent human–divine relationship was universal, a position that diverged from the core of conviction.

Finally, I discussed Jones' year at Harvard, showing that much of the material he studied there found its way into *Social Law*. In particular, Royce's concern to relate individuals to an ultimate consciousness is a central theme in *Social Law*. Peabody's blend of social concern and a sympathy for mysticism is reflected in Jones' treatment of affirmation mysticism as a felt experience of God that results in social action. Palmer's term the 'conjunct self' is expanded in terms of a relationship God and appears throughout *Social Law*. Finally, Thayer supervised the thesis that was the basis of the final chapter in *Social Law*.

It is worthwhile to pause here briefly to consider the magnitude of the task that Jones set himself in synthesizing all these themes. Not only were James' and Royce's ideas of God not Christian, they were not even compatible with each other. James was opposed to idealism, and following Royce's Gifford lectures wrote a

critique that Royce responded to in a 23-page letter.¹²⁶ And when James was preparing his own Gifford lectures, he wrote to Royce that he was doing so in the exclusive hope of overthrowing Royce's idealism and ruining his peace.¹²⁷ Whether we view Jones' attempt as supremely ambitious or simply naïve, it is no surprise that it generated controversy.

In summary, the Manchester Conference consolidated the liberal/modernist agenda within Quakerism, and the particular form that modern thought took for Jones was shaped by his year at Harvard. Significantly, however, although many aspects of this thought were consistent with Jones' disposition and experience and with some of the tenets of Quakerism, they were not always consistent with the core of conviction. In the next chapter, I start to explore in more detail Jones' efforts to synthesize his Quaker-informed experience and modern thought, starting with his attempts to reconcile the nebulous and potentially impersonal 'more' of James and 'Absolute' of Royce with the personal, Christian God.

¹²⁶ Oppenheim, 'James and Royce', 88.

¹²⁷ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 85.

Chapter 4

God is personal

If we could drop our plummet down through the deeps of one personality we could tell all the meanings of the visible world, all the problems of social life and all the secrets of the eternal Personal Self.¹

Jones' childhood experience was of a personal God who guided individuals, and the theological framework within which he expressed this was that of the loving Father of Christianity. In later years, his insistence that psychology, a science that studied the person, would shed light on God's character also implies that he thought of God as personal. Royce's idealism, with which Jones was attempting a synthesis, however, faced criticism for its impersonal picture of God. The difference between the Christian and idealism-inspired conceptions of God and the implications of this difference were recognized by the psychologist James Leuba, who pointed out that 'A strenuous effort is made in religious circles, supposedly in the interest of religion, to conceal the magnitude of the difference between the God of the Christian religion and the impassable, infinite Reality of metaphysics. It seems clear, however, that the passage from the former to the latter belief would mean nothing less than the disappearance of the religious worship of today.'² Thus Jones' attempted synthesis encountered a significant problem at a very basic level, namely whether God should be thought of as personal or impersonal.

¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 66.

² Leuba, *Psychology of Religious Mysticism*, 304.

Jones' solution to this problem is obscured by his desire to write a work that was not 'a metaphysical treatise'.³ This self-imposed *theological and philosophical naivety* means that he never addresses this difference directly, so the details of his resolution have to be inferred before they can be assessed. Furthermore, his *informal style* means that he sometimes stresses one conception of God over the other, leaving himself open to being misunderstood or quoted out of context. All the above factors likely contributed to Emil Brunner's claim that Jones was not a Christian but a neo-Platonist,⁴ and to Hugh Rock's (see Chapter 9) conclusion that Jones retained language of God as a 'gloss':⁵ neither of these comments reflects the idea that Jones believed in a personal, loving God.

In view of these ambiguities, I supplement *Social Law* with material from some of Jones' early editorials from *The American Friend*, which were initially published in 1899 in a volume entitled *Practical Christianity*, and then again in a substantially extended edition in 1905. *Practical Christianity* aimed to show Quakers how to 'practice the presence of God'.⁶ It returns again and again to a handful of themes: (i) Christianity must be applied to life – active service strengthens faith and brings about the Kingdom; (ii) internal evidence is of primary importance – every Christian needs an awareness of God's presence; and (iii) the formulation of Christianity has to change according to current thought, although its essence remains the same. In effect, then, *Social Law* and *Practical Christianity* are two books written at about the same time on broadly the same subject, but with different audiences (Quakers in *Practical Christianity* and the general public in *Social Law*) and with different aims (an enhanced spiritual life in *Practical Christianity* and the intellectual credibility of that life in *Social Law*).⁷ *Practical Christianity* at times has a more evangelical tone

³ Jones, *Social Law*, 45.

⁴ C. Heath, *The Challenge of Karl Barth* (London: Allenson, 1932), 30.

⁵ Rock, 'Rufus Jones never did establish', 63.

⁶ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 2.

⁷ Jones tailored his message to his audience, as recognized by Chester Jacob Teller, who studied under Jones in 1905. In a letter to Jones' biographer David Hinshaw, Teller recounts that the subjects

than *Social Law* (see Chapter 6), but together they provide a fuller picture of Jones' thought than either one would in isolation.

On the basis of these two works, I will suggest that there are three main strands in Jones' discussions about God. Drawing on Christianity, as expressed both through the way he interpreted his personal religious experience and through the Bible, Jones presented a picture of God as personal and loving. Drawing on idealism, as expounded by Royce, he seized on the idea that human consciousness is a particular instance of God's consciousness. Drawing on psychology, as propounded by James, he projected human attributes onto God. Underlying these three strands is a theme that chimes with the Social Gospel, namely that God is at work to improve society. The three strands could result in very different views of God: as noted above, a God based on idealism could be an impersonal universal consciousness rather than an active personal God guiding society through individuals; and a God based on psychology could resemble the gods of the Ancient world with their human vices rather than the Christian God of love.

I will further suggest that Jones synthesizes ideas about God arising from Christianity with those arising from idealism by using insights from psychology about love, consciousness and ideals, and that he synthesizes ideas about God arising from Christianity with those arising from psychology by being selective in the qualities he attributes to humans and projects onto God. Although these strategies go some way creating a coherent picture of God, Jones still ends up with a *multivalent theism*. I also identify several areas where Jones diverges from the core of conviction and the Quaker tradition; in particular, his reliance on idealism and his reliance on psychology both require a universal, inherent relationship of humans with God. Finally, I identify several weaknesses in his arguments, for example that he assumes that the best in human nature reveals the nature of God, but glosses

that Jones taught during the week often reappeared during Meeting, but with a different slant to better suit the place and congregation (Hinshaw, *Master Quaker*, 149).

over the implications of this strategy when it comes to the human capacity for evil. As far as I am aware, analysing Jones' theism in terms of his reliance on Christianity, idealism and psychology is a novel approach.

I start by commenting on early 20th century descriptions of God in relation to whether God is personal. I then explore how successful Jones was in his aim of reconciling fundamentally different views of God in relation to God's character and attributes.

4.1 Jones' view of God in historical context

Jones' presentation of God has to be seen in the context of two seemingly contradictory tendencies regarding discussions about God at the start of the 20th century. The first is the emphasis on the personal associated with the Boston philosopher Borden Parker Bowne. The second is the common practice of using impersonal language about the divine. I discuss these briefly before offering an overview of Jones' thought about God.

Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910) was the dominant figure in the movement known as Boston personalism, or personal idealism,⁸ and there are certainly many similarities between Bowne and Jones. Dorrien, for example, notes that Bowne's personalist school affirmed 'moral intuition *and* religious experience *and* the social gospel *and* metaphysical reason'.⁹ Jones did too, and they both asserted that life only made sense if the world exists through a mind analogous to the human mind, and that matter cannot cause mind.¹⁰ Bowne was a more circumspect theologian than Jones though: whereas in *Theism* (originally published in 1887 and revised in 1902) Bowne cautions that 'a little reflection warns us against transferring our finite

⁸ See e.g. G. Dorrien, 'Making liberal theology metaphysical: Personalist idealism as a theological school', *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 24 (2003): 214–244.

⁹ Dorrien, 'Making liberal theology metaphysical', 215.

¹⁰ Dorrien, 'Making liberal theology metaphysical', 216; Jones, *Inner Life*, 148.

peculiarities and limitations [to God] without careful inspection',¹¹ Jones displays little hesitation in attributing human qualities to God. I do not discuss Bowne in detail here though, primarily because Jones does not refer to him in *Social Law*, nor in his wider corpus as far as I am aware. Indeed, given that a number of Bowne's books were not published until after *Social Law* (e.g. *The Immanence of God* in 1905 and *Personalism* in 1908), it is possible that Jones was not familiar with Bowne's work directly in 1904. It is, however, possible that Bowne's thinking reached Jones at second-hand through his Harvard teachers: elements of Bowne's personalism can be found in Palmer, James and Royce, although the latter did not classify himself as a personalist.¹²

Curiously, however, in spite of the background of personalism, a number of religious writers who believed in a personal God used impersonal language. In his PhD thesis, for example, Raymond Brown analysed the language of three scholars of mysticism, namely Friedrich von Hügel (a devout Catholic), Ralph Inge (the Dean of St Paul's) and Evelyn Underhill (a prominent Anglo-Catholic), concluding that all of them used both personal and impersonal language and symbols to refer to God.¹³ Similarly, the language that Jones uses throughout his corpus to refer to God – the More of Life, the Oversoul or Over-self, the Concrete Infinite – is not unequivocally personal (although his capitalization of James' term 'the more' perhaps indicates that he was attempting to make it so). In other words, Jones' use of impersonal terms for God was not unusual and does not imply that he held an impersonal view of God.

Because Jones' conception of God as it is presented in *Social Law* is not systematic but has to be pieced together from comments scattered throughout the book, and

¹¹ B. P. Bowne, *Theism* (American Book Company: New York, 1902), 170.

¹² G. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805–1900* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 380.

¹³ R. L. Brown, 'The Doctrine of God in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century English Mysticism as Found in Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Evelyn Underhill, and William Inge' (PhD thesis, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, LA, 1978).

because Jones' thought as a whole is coherent, it is useful to start with an overview of his view of God in relation to the rest of his thought. Jones provides such an overview in a 1926 lecture entitled 'My Idea of God'.¹⁴

Jones revealed the centrality and scope of his idea of God when he told his audience that 'It is impossible for me to tell how I think of God without first giving a brief review of the way in which I think of the universe, of man, of the development of history and literature, and especially of the supreme event of history, the life of Christ.'¹⁵ Briefly, he asserts that the universe is spiritual, evolving and reveals beauty, truth and love; that humans are spiritual beings; that the historical process is progressive; and that Christ is the personal face of God that has broken through. After these preliminaries, Jones sketches his idea of God: 'When I think of God as Spirit, then, I think of Him as the Ground and Source of all that we can call Mind or Reason in the universe.'¹⁶ This statement, with its emphasis on immanence, is immediately tempered, however, with the recognition that 'not everything in the universe is God ... there are things here that ought not to be here ... God is that intelligent Spirit who is accomplishing *the good*.'¹⁷ The necessary implication, Jones continues, is that God must 'be the maker of goals, the creator of onward trails, the builder of unattained purposes'.¹⁸ Far from this Spirit being remote and unapproachable, however, God provides light and guidance in Christ. Thus, Jones' mature concept of God is as both immanent and transcendent, as being revealed in Christ, and as working out good purposes through humans.

Although this lecture was given two decades later than *Social Law*, the picture of God in the two works is fairly similar (with, as we will see, the exception of a more balanced emphasis on God's transcendence in the later work). In *Social Law*,

¹⁴ R. M. Jones, 'My idea of God' (typewritten manuscript), HC Box 74.

¹⁵ Jones, 'My idea of God', 1.

¹⁶ Jones, 'My idea of God', 6.

¹⁷ Jones, 'My idea of God', 7.

¹⁸ Jones, 'My idea of God', 8.

however, the emphasis is on showing how this picture is consistent with insights from social psychology and idealism. Obvious questions about this endeavour include which insights are relevant, and, just as importantly, which are not, and how the leap from a science about humans to knowledge of the divine can be justified. Here I look at how Jones answered these questions by referring to both *Social Law* and *Practical Christianity*.

My discussion is structured around how Jones viewed the character of God (Section 4.2), the transcendence/immanence of God (Section 4.3), and the related questions of how we can know God and know that God exists (Section 4.4). For each section, I determine how Jones drew on Christianity, idealism and psychology to inform his views, and how he attempted to synthesize the insights he gained from these three fields.

4.2 The character of God

I have taken one aspect of the core of conviction to be the fact that God is characterized by love. There is no doubt that Jones was in conformity on this point. What is of particular interest is how he viewed the love of God through the lenses of psychology and idealism.

4.2.1 Insights from Christianity

In *Social Law*, the character of God is seen as being revealed primarily through the character of Jesus: ‘we can hardly hope that a higher idea of God’s nature will be revealed to men than that which was embodied in Jesus Christ.’¹⁹ Most of the book is, however, devoid of explicit biblical references about God’s character. The exception is the final chapter, which was, recall, written under the supervision of the biblical scholar Thayer. Here Jones quotes numerous verses and stresses that

¹⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 33.

“‘[God] is Love,’ which is another way of saying that it is fundamental to His nature to go out of Himself, to give and share Himself.”²⁰

In *Practical Christianity*, aimed at a Christian Quaker audience, Jones leaves his readers in no doubt that God is associated primarily with love: ‘this God is Love’; God’s plan is to realize the Kingdom by drawing men to it by ‘Grace and Love’; God is ‘an impalpable Spirit of Life and Love’.²¹ The editorial ‘Behind the gate’, written shortly after Lowell’s death, gives an illustration of what it might feel like to be on the receiving end of this love.²² Jones was walking down a street when he saw a young girl unable to open the gate to get back into her garden. She pounded to no avail, but when she burst into loud tears the response was immediate: ‘Hastily the gate was pulled open, the little child was caught by the mother’s loving arms and the tears were kissed away.’²³ Jones himself found the scene comforting and was quick to draw a parable for his readers: ‘But the love behind *our* gate is every bit as real as that which the little child found when her cry reached through.’ This love is not one-way, however: the human response to God involves ‘an intense love and devotion, a profound appreciation of His forgiveness and unbounded love’.²⁴ When writing for a Quaker audience, then, Jones draws on the Bible, descriptions of emotional responses to God, and what may best be described as spiritual intuition, namely the leap from an observed event (a child at a gate) to a spiritual reality.

The two books taken together thus present the traditional Christian idea that God is love, although, notably, omit any mention that God judges with a view to punish. This picture reflects the message that Jones had heard in his childhood: Eli and Peace emphasized the love rather than the judgement of God, recall. It is exemplified in an incident that Jones says proved a turning point in his spiritual life.

²⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 266.

²¹ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 17, 30, 34, respectively.

²² For details on the background to this editorial, see R.M. Jones, *Quakerism, A Spiritual Movement* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Meeting of Friends, 1963), 23.

²³ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 35–36.

²⁴ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 24.

Having done something that 'grieved' his family, Jones was expecting a rare punishment, but instead his mother took him to his room, knelt beside him and prayed in a way that made him see 'just what I was, and no less clearly what I ought to be, and what with [God's] help I might be.'²⁵ In other words, Jones' view of God is biblically informed but with an *experiential basis* of love rather than punishment.

4.2.2 Insights from psychology

Jones, like Drummond in relation to the natural sciences, was convinced that the laws of psychology could reveal the character of God: 'the laws and principles which our inner life reveals enable us to discover also the nature and spirit of the infinite Person with whom our finite lives are bound up.'²⁶ Thus 'Jones the psychologist' points out that because all the laws of an individual's life are social laws, personal life is necessarily '*conjunct*, i.e. in an organic group'.²⁷ From this he draws the conclusion that 'the fact that *personal life is conjunct* must necessarily have profound religious significance. If man cannot be a self alone, no more can God. Love, if it is to be anything more than a bare abstraction, means that the one who loves, *loves somebody* that His life is interrelated with other lives.'²⁸

Note that here Jones is moving from an observation about human social, or group, life to one about God, which is a strategy not without risks, as Bowne was aware. First, Jones is being selective in associating group life with love. Groups are perfectly capable of exploitation, marginalization, racism and in-fighting, for instance, characteristics which Jones presumably would not want to apply to God. In effect, he is advocating the psychologically informed equivalent of a view of God's character that might, for example, draw on the beauty and grandeur of a sunset but ignore the destructive power of a volcanic eruption. Second, Jones seems to be

²⁵ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 110.

²⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 16.

²⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 17.

²⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 17–18.

implying that God created humans because God needed to have someone to love. But humans who love each other could have been created by a god who recognized that humans would need to be able to give and receive love to survive but who did not need a relationship with them. To be able to establish a connection between the love apparent in group life and God's purported need for humans, Jones would need to start from God being characterized by love, and humans then reflecting this characteristic, rather than starting with a characteristic of humans and ending with a characteristic of God. That is, Jones' observation that humans love each other is *consistent* with the New Testament understanding of God as love, but is not a *proof* that God needs humans in order to have someone to love.

4.2.3 Insights from idealism

Royce, recall from Chapter 3, was accused by LeConte of identifying God primarily with thought rather than with love,²⁹ and it is perhaps the case that any picture of God based on idealism, as recognized by Leuba, is most naturally impersonal and impassive. Indeed, Jones' statement that 'we must admit the reality of an infinite Self who is the Life of our lives and that every little inlet of human consciousness opens into the total whole of reality' emphasizes a shared consciousness rather than a shared ability to love.³⁰ As will become apparent in Chapter 7, however, this concept of shared consciousness is crucial to Jones' formulation of the Inner Light. It is thus important for Jones to be able to synthesize the God of idealism with the God he saw as being characterized by love. His implicit strategy, as we will now see, involved using insights from psychology.

4.2.4 Jones' synthesis

Jones does not set out his synthesis explicitly, but from isolated comments it is possible to see how he associated love with infinite consciousness. First, he views

²⁹ Royce, *Conception of God*, 68–69.

³⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 244.

an essential characteristic of consciousness as the ability to work for a desired end. James discusses this in *Principles*, making a comparison between iron filings, which are drawn to a magnet but cannot find their way around obstacles to get there, and Romeo's creative attempts to meet Juliet: 'With the lover it is the end which is fixed, the path may be modified indefinitely.'³¹ Although Jones does not cite James, he similarly gives one of the marks of personality as the 'power to forecast an end or purpose and to direct action toward it'.³² Or, as he puts it in another context in *Social Law*, a 'person is a being who is living toward an unrealized purpose, an unattained ideal'.³³

Crucially, Jones assumes that the ideals that are the mark of personality are 'good', and, he says, we would not have them if we were not rooted in a 'larger Self'.³⁴ In fact, we can seek good ends 'only by belonging in a larger Life which already possesses the Good. We discover the *good* by discovering the purposes of the Self in whose life we share.'³⁵ In other words, Jones is assigning 'good' ideals to God, and because ideals are a psychologically validated marker of consciousness (at least according to James), he is in effect using research from psychology on the nature of consciousness to draw together the God of idealism, or absolute consciousness, and the loving Father of Christianity.

Jones' understanding of what the 'good' ideals of God entailed owed much to the prevailing progressivism and Social Gospel movement. Thus in *Practical Christianity*, God's ideals are expressed in terms of the gradual building of the kingdom of God: 'Christ's work could have been finished in a moment, but it was rather God's plan to realize the kingdom on the earth progressively – to draw men to it by Grace and

³¹ James, *Principles*, 10.

³² Jones, *Social Law*, 51.

³³ Jones, *Social Law*, 231–232.

³⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 232.

³⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 234.

Love.³⁶ Similarly, in *Social Law* '[the affirmation mystic's] mission on earth is to be a fellow worker with God ... bringing to reality a kingdom of God.'³⁷

There are a number of weaknesses to this approach. First, Jones' assertion that we have good ideals because we are rooted in 'the Good' raises the question of the implications of our selfish or evil ideals for God's character: presumably Jones would not want to say that these too originated in God. Second, he is being selective in taking his psychological insights from James. Münsterberg, as noted in the previous chapter, was one psychologist who disagreed with James, insisting that there was no such thing as free will and that human culture should be considered materialistically and was nothing but the result of automatic reactions:³⁸ in other words, for Münsterberg, ideals, if they can be said to exist at all, certainly do not originate in God. The fact that Jones was writing for lay people notwithstanding, *Social Law* might have been more balanced if he had addressed Münsterberg's view.

In summary, it seems clear that Jones, as a Christian, identified the character of God with love, and God's purposes with 'building the kingdom'. This is the picture presented in both *Practical Christianity* and *Social Law*. In *Social Law*, Jones implicitly makes this idea consistent with the latest research in psychology and ideas in philosophy. His inferences from psychology on the character of God necessitate that the human capacity for evil is neglected, a weakness in his argument that we could perhaps attribute in part to the general liberal optimism and to his *experiential basis* arising from a home life in which love was central. His inferences from idealism involved assuming that consciousness involves the capacity to work for ends, and, crucially, that these ends are 'good'. It seems likely that this capacity was informed by James' *Principles*, meaning that Jones was using

³⁶ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 30.

³⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 153–154.

³⁸ Hale, *Münsterberg*, 40

insights from psychology (albeit insights that were not universally agreed on, cf. Münsterberg) to identify the God of idealism with the God of Christianity. Jones does not always make this identification clear in his discussions, however, meaning that at times his view of God seems more similar to an impersonal universal consciousness than to a traditional Christian conception.

4.3 The transcendence and immanence of God

It is inherently difficult to express the balance between the transcendence and the immanence of God. Jones confessed his early inadequacy in this regard in 1934, when he wrote that in college he knew ‘that transcendence is as essential for a God of spiritual reality as immanence is’, but that he ‘did not yet know how adequately to hold fast to the one without losing the other’.³⁹ Here I discuss his treatment of immanence and transcendence in *Social Law* and *Practical Christianity*, but also comment on how the emphasis on immanence therein became more balanced with transcendence in later years.

4.3.1 Insights from Christianity

In *Practical Christianity*, Jones asserts that ‘The man who goes to work in the line of his duty finds that the God who did not come in the great forces of nature – wind, earthquake, fire – does come in quieter, and in less striking ways, as the power which makes use of a feeble human instrument.’⁴⁰ In other words, God does not work as a transcendent, dramatic, outside agency but as an immanent, subtle, inner strength. Note that Jones’ argument for God’s immanence here refers to the Bible but is primarily experiential: long ago, Elijah found God in the whisper after the

³⁹ Jones, *Middle Years*, 41.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 38.

wind, earthquake and fire (1 Kings 19); today, individuals experience God through finding inner strength.

In *Social Law*, Jones once more refers to Elijah's experience, affirming that 'As of old [God] is not in the storm, He is not in the earthquake, He is not in the fire'.⁴¹ And in the cluster of biblical verses at the end of the book, he quotes 1 Jn 3:9, concluding that 'He is the ever-abiding, immanent God, producing a society of those who know Him, because He dwelleth with them and is in them.'⁴² The importance of action arising from God's immanence is not brought out here, although it is arguably implicit, but it is discussed in his chapters on mysticism and the Inner Light (see my Chapters 7 and 8). Conversely, Jones' reluctance to embrace the transcendence of God is apparent in a footnote, where he links an emphasis on the transcendence of God to a type of mysticism that aims to experience God apart from the world and that Jones disliked precisely because it did not result in action.⁴³

From the material in *Practical Christianity* and *Social Law*, then, we can conclude that Jones argues for the immanence of God on an experiential and scriptural basis and associates it with strength for carrying out God's will. Note that this emphasis on immanence reflected Jones' own childhood religious experience (his *experiential basis*) in the context of a Christian Quaker community. Those who undergo a conversion experience would, by contrast, perhaps be more aware of God's transcendence, because they had had an experience of being separated from God.

4.3.2 Insights from Royce

In addition to expressing the immanence of God within a Christian framework, Jones stresses that God is everywhere by quoting from Royce, who in turn is referring to a passage in *Chandogya*. A youth is asked to cut open a small seed by a sage and is queried about what he sees. When the youth answers 'nothing', the

⁴¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 38.

⁴² Jones, *Social Law*, 270.

⁴³ Jones, *Social Law*, 42.

sage replies 'Believe, O gentle youth, what that hidden thing is, of whose essence is all the world – that is the Reality, that is the Soul, *that art thou*.'⁴⁴ The immediate impression here is that Jones is subscribing to a Christless pantheism. Jones' failure to address the discrepancy between this passage and the Christian conception of immanence that is clearly apparent elsewhere in his work arguably arises from his *theological naivety* and his *informal style*. This failure has potentially serious consequences though: as we will see in Chapter 9, it is a passage similar to the one from *Chandogya* that Jones used elsewhere that led one modern commentator to conclude that Jones made the soul divine and divorced it from Christ.

Jones also argued that the fact that we have ideals points to God's immanence. This is because every idea and ideal suggests an organic interrelation between ourselves and God, who 'manifests a bit of His life at our minute focus-point'.⁴⁵ And, in fact, a transcendent God, one who sat aloof in 'splendid isolation', would provide no explanation for 'our seekings and findings'.⁴⁶ As we will see in Section 4.3.4, however, in later life Jones used the fact that we have ideals to argue *for* rather than *against* the transcendence of God (in essence, the very existence of ideals implies that there is a transcendent aspect to the world, something beyond it as it is at the moment).

4.3.3 Insights from psychology

Jones also objects to the transcendence of God on psychological grounds, in that he claims that to view God and humans as separated is 'contrary to all the known facts of psychology'.⁴⁷ This rather sweeping statement is modified in the later version (if my theory of Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2.1 is correct) to the assertion that 'This view is not founded on the testimony of experience'. Although Jones is in fact discussing

⁴⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 148.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 242.

⁴⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 243.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 174.

the Inner Light here, the assertions in both versions (one referring to psychology and the other to experience) are used to make the point that the idea of a transcendent God results in 'an unbridged and unbridgeable gulf between the divine and the human'.⁴⁸ In other words, the fact that we can experience God has the corollary that God is immanent, because a transcendent God would mean that there was a divine realm on the one hand separated from an un-divine realm on the other.

The weaknesses of this argument are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 on the Inner Light. I merely note here that Jones is making assumptions about God's immanence based on psychological insights that suit his purpose. He is ignoring, for example, psychological research that suggested that experience of God was self-deception (cf. Leuba's experiment with blindfolded students described in Chapter 3).

4.3.4 Jones' view in later years and his attempted synthesis

In later years, Jones maintained his insistence that God was immanent. In 'Why I enroll', for example, he stresses that from *Social Law* onwards he had been trying to show that God is revealed 'in the finite-infinite nature of our own self-consciousness as persons'.⁴⁹ He increasingly recognized, however, that an overemphasis on immanence had its dangers, and that transcendence was also important. In *The Faith and Practice of Quakers*, for example, he was aware that immanence could drift into pantheism: 'We find it easy and normal to think of God as immanent ... though I hope none of us would be satisfied with an immanence which confused God with the universe and identified Him with it.'⁵⁰ In *Pathways to the Reality of God*, in a chapter entitled 'The Immanence of God', Jones explains how God can be both within us and beyond us, namely immanent and

⁴⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 175.

⁴⁹ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 211.

⁵⁰ R. M. Jones, *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers* (London: Methuen, 1927), 42.

transcendent: 'We see stars billions of miles away, only because something from the star is actually operating on the retina and in the visual center of the brain; and so, too, we find God, only because Something that is God – God as Spirit – is actually in contact with the spiritual center within us that is kindred to Him.'⁵¹ In other words, just as stars are in some sense experienced within (through the retina and brain) although they are external, so God is experienced in our spiritual centre but is also beyond it.

Jones also expressed this more balanced understanding in a couple of letters in the 1930s, to Ellen Carr and Mack Williams. Carr must have written to him about the conceptual difficulty of praying to a God who was within. 'It is not a very serious difficulty', Jones assures her. Ever ready with an analogy, he explains that 'Nobody, of course, for a moment supposes that the entire nature and reality of God is ever present in any person, any more than the whole of sunlight ever comes through one single window. There can be a point of light from God break [*sic*] into our human souls, but there is infinitely more of Him beyond us.'⁵²

The letter to Williams gives the following advice: 'It seems to me that you ought to emphasize a good deal more than you do the point that any God who could be adequate for us must be transcendent as well as immanent'.⁵³ Interestingly Jones justifies this latter suggestion by pointing out 'the spirit in any man is always transcendent. It goes far beyond anything that has yet been expressed in and through the life ... It is necessarily even more so with the God of the universe that He is more than any expression of His life in terms of the visible present universe.'⁵⁴ In effect, he is saying that humans have ideals, which points to the transcendence of humans and therefore to the transcendence of God. This is clearly a shift from the discussion of ideals in *Social Law* mentioned in Section 4.3.2 above, where the fact

⁵¹ Jones, *Pathways*, 21

⁵² To Ellen Carr, 6 February 1935, HC Box 57.

⁵³ To Mack Williams, 25 October 1930, HC Box 56.

⁵⁴ To Mack Williams, 25 October 1930, HC Box 56.

that humans have ideals is used to emphasize the fact that God is in a relationship with them and is not 'aloof'.

In summary, although both the transcendence and the immanence of God are apparent within Christianity, Jones emphasized immanence at the expense of transcendence in *Social Law*. At least two reasons can be proposed for this. First, as noted in Chapter 2, a stress on the immanence of God was a hallmark of liberal theology (although in later years it would elicit a corrective reaction from the Barthian school). Second, it seems likely that an emphasis on God's immanence best explained Jones' own experience of God's presence. This emphasis on God's immanence at times verges on pantheism, partly as a result of Jones' *informal style* and *theological naivety*. For example, he quotes Royce's use of *Changdoya* to give a picture of God's close relationship with the world, but does not point out that this illustration is pantheistic, nor that it diverges from the core of conviction. In later years he went some way to recognizing his early failure to adequately emphasize the transcendence of God and to achieving a better balance.

The stress on God's immanence goes hand in hand with an awareness of God's presence, which brings us to our next topic: the related questions of how we can know God and thereby know that God exists.

4.4 Knowing God and proving that God exists

Jones devotes a chapter ('The Quest') to discussing how we can know that God exists. He critiques traditional arguments for the existence of God based on causality (a God discovered in this way would be finite and impersonal) and on design (the Artist himself will be forever outside creation and his character will remain unknown). Neither can God be found by science: 'Our rigid methods of scientific research increase our reverence and deepen our solemnity, but they do not and they cannot *find* God for us. Science deals only with describable things, i.e.,

one thing alongside other things, therefore this quest is not for science.’⁵⁵ For Jones, we know that God exists because we experience God, and this is the case only because, as noted above, God is immanent: ‘*either* God is to be thought of as interrelated and conjunct with us, *or* we are compelled to give up finding Him and sink back into a quiescent agnosticism; for if we did not possess some common qualities, we could not know Him *even though we found Him*.’⁵⁶ Once again, he draws on Christianity, psychology and idealism to make his case.

4.4.1 Insights from Christianity

Jones found that experience (and therefore knowledge) of God could occur in almost any situation (through prayer, Meeting for Worship, beauty in nature, serving others etc.). Some of these will be discussed further in Chapter 10. Here I focus on prayer, because it brings together many of the themes discussed above. In *Social Law*, prayer is envisaged in the context of union with God. For example, Jones cites George MacDonald as expressing an ideal prayer: ‘Leave me not, God, until – nay, until when? / Not till I am with thee, one heart, one mind.’⁵⁷ With reference to the Bible, he asserts that ‘the profound prayer in Ephesians asks that ‘Christ may dwell in your hearts’ and that for John prayer is the ‘sign and mark of a union with God’.⁵⁸ Jones view of prayer, then, is in line with his emphasis on God as love and as immanent.

Jones’ comments on intercessory prayer reflect this emphasis. An editorial in *Practical Christianity* entitled ‘What not to pray for’ is informative in this respect.⁵⁹ Prayer is ‘the highest activity of the soul’, Jones professes, and it should certainly not be used for selfish gratification. Although Jones does not make the point, it is perhaps the case that a selfish request of God puts a distance between God and the

⁵⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 38; see also a similar sentiment in Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 34.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 19 (italics as in original).

⁵⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 156.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 256 and 271.

⁵⁹ The article and following quotations are in Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 39–40.

person praying, because the person praying and their prayer would not necessarily be reflecting the love of God. In other words, selfish prayer arises from a relationship with God in which God is primarily transcendent. Requests to God should, by contrast, originate in a transformative relationship with God: 'It is only as a person enters more deeply into the life of the Spirit that he sees the true things to ask for, so that the increase in the power of prayer is a good test of spiritual growth'. Here, then, the requests arise from a relationship with God in which God is immanent.

It is also notable that praise as a form of prayer sits more readily with an emphasis on the transcendence rather than the immanence of God, and Jones appreciated this in later years. His 1930 letter to Mack Williams cited above explains that the transcendence of God is the basis of 'the awe, reverence and adoration that are so essential to genuine religion', so perhaps Jones underwent a change in how he thought about prayer that coincided with his shift away from an over-emphasis on the immanence of God.

Prayer, then, seems to be for Jones essentially about union with God, transformation, and alignment with God's purposes. It is a way to experience God and therefore a way to know that God exists.

4.4.2 Insights from psychology

Jones believed that knowledge of God would also come through psychology: 'All attempts to find God apart from and dis severed from personal life have failed' he asserted. Rather, '[t]he true path is through personality. The search must *begin* in our own bosom: Who am I? What do I live by? What does personality involve? How am I related to my fellows and to nature?'⁶⁰ This, he says, involves a study 'of both the conscious and the subconscious life',⁶¹ which in practice for him meant the

⁶⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 44.

⁶¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 45.

psychological insights of James, Royce and Baldwin. The logic of Jones' reasoning here is clear enough: God is found within; psychology illuminates the inner life; so psychology can provide knowledge about God.

There are, however, several potential problems with this approach, discussion of which is deferred until later chapters. First, we run again into the obvious objection that humans are flawed, so that there needs to be a way of distinguishing which aspects of personality reveal God and which do not. This problem is discussed in Chapter 5. Second, we can ask why, if God can be found within, there is a need for a historical Christ. This problem is discussed in Chapter 6. Finally, Jones' hopes that psychology would reveal God were disappointed as psychology moved towards behaviourism and Freud developed theories of the subconscious that saw it as home to repressed sexual urges rather than as revealing God. This problem is discussed in Chapter 10.

4.4.3 Insights from idealism

Jones' comments on knowledge of God relating to idealism are found in his chapter 'The self and Over-Self'. We know we are finite, so there must be an infinite aspect to us, he argues, and, furthermore, 'that consciousness which knows finitude is joined into a Life which is infinite and eternal'.⁶² Even the fact that we can name objects points to the existence of God, because 'every "object" which we seek to know, if it is an object which has reality in the nature of things, is already a mental fact in the life of that larger Self in whom we share'.⁶³ In other words, ideas and intimations of finiteness both point to the existence of God.

Furthermore, Jones sees proof of God's existence in the fact of consciousness itself. For him, consciousness can never be reduced to movements of molecules and a physical explanation. This is most clearly spelled out in *The Inner Life*, where he

⁶² Jones, *Social Law*, 230.

⁶³ Jones, *Social Law*, 242.

declares that 'it seems absurd to suppose that consciousness is a product of matter or of any natural, mechanical process'.⁶⁴ Rather, the consciousness of an individual is an expression of a universal consciousness: in *Social Law*, he writes that 'we must admit the reality of an infinite Self who is the Life of our lives and that every little inlet of human consciousness opens into the total whole of reality'.⁶⁵ Clearly, this argument will be substantially weakened and require modification if consciousness is explained scientifically. From a philosophical point of view, the proof also becomes less compelling if idealism is no longer fashionable, which was the case towards the end of Jones' life. Proofs of God's existence arising from idealism are therefore a product of Jones' historical context and thereby susceptible to future challenges.

4.4.4 Towards a synthesis

Jones denied that we could find God through arguments based on causality or design or through science (by which he presumably meant the physical sciences rather than psychology), all of which would reveal a transcendent God. Rather, his proofs for God's existence were based on God's immanence. Ultimately, for Jones experience was sufficient proof, and Christianity, psychology and idealism offered complementary approaches to exploring this experience. Prayer, seen in the context of union with God, offered a pathway to the experience itself. Psychology provided the tools to analyse it. Idealism provided the metaphysical foundation.

There are, however, problems with all of these approaches. Jones' reliance on personal experience of God as proof of God's existence, as will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, makes the problematic assumption that everyone is capable of an awareness of God. Psychology, in the theories of Freud and behaviourism, could be used to argue that God did not exist. And idealism was beginning to wane by the end of Jones' life. Furthermore, proofs that rely on a universal experience of

⁶⁴ Jones, *Inner Life*, 148.

⁶⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 244.

God have the potential to diverge from the core of conviction, because there is no need for a historical Christ to reconcile humans and God.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed Jones' theism in relation to Christianity, psychology and idealism, proposed ways in which he tried to synthesize potentially incompatible views of God, and pointed out where and how he diverged from the core of conviction. My approach was to consider Jones' view of the character of God, the immanence and transcendence of God, and knowledge of God. Because Jones himself presents neither his view of God nor his synthesis systematically, I have attempted to clarify his views by consolidating comments from throughout *Social Law*. At various points I also referred to *Practical Christianity*, a work written at about the same time as *Social Law* but with a different audience and therefore with a different emphasis and form of expression.

Regarding the character of God, Jones' foundational idea is that God is characterized by love, in particular as revealed by Christ. In *Practical Christianity*, the basis of this picture is biblical and the affective response of humans is acknowledged. In *Social Law*, Jones again takes the biblical picture as fundamental but implicitly makes it consistent with the potentially impersonal character of God according to idealism by using material that appears in James' *Principles*. He argues that one aspect of human consciousness is the ability to work for ends, and, assuming that these ends are good, he transposes this ability to God, who is seen as building the kingdom of God on earth and thereby as exhibiting love. The weak point of this argument is that humans often work for ends that are not good, so there is no reason why God's aims should be conceived of as good if humans are taken as the starting point. Furthermore, although his view of God is consistent with

the core of conviction, Jones does not address the biblical theme of judgement leading to punishment.

Regarding the immanence and transcendence of God, both *Practical Christianity* and *Social Law* emphasize the immanence of God and link it with social action – God gives inner strength and guidance for the tasks that need to be done. This idea is given a firm biblical foundation and is in line with the emphasis of liberal Christianity and the Social Gospel. Jones also argues that the immanence of God is consistent with psychology, in that we would not be able to experience a transcendent God because of the unbridgeable gulf between the divine and the ‘un-divine’, an argument I return to in Chapter 7. He further explores God’s immanence with reference to a quotation from *Changdoya* lifted from Royce. The problem here is that the passage in question has the flavour of a Christless pantheism, a difference from Christianity that Jones does not address. The emphasis on immanence from Christianity, psychology and idealism neglects the biblical strand of transcendence that is apparent in the core of conviction, although Jones went some way to recognizing and correcting this imbalance in later years.

Finally, Jones insists that knowledge of God and proofs for God’s existence start with experience. His view of prayer is of an experience of God in the context of a transformative union that focuses on the needs of the world; it thus reflects his view of God as being characterized by love and as immanent. In *Social Law* Jones was confident that knowledge of God within would be illuminated by psychology, but this confidence was later eroded. He also relied on idealism to show that God exists, in that our experience of finitude and of having ideas and ideals all point to the existence of a greater consciousness. The problem here is that idealism would soon become unfashionable, and there is always the possibility that an explanation for consciousness will be found, meaning that these aspects of his arguments are historically contingent.

It can thus be seen that Jones attempted to synthesize modern thought and Christianity in relation to theism, but in doing so diverged at points from the core of conviction. This discrepancy can be analysed in terms of the five factors identified in earlier chapters. That is, the fundamental difference between the 'Christian God' and the 'Absolute' resulted in Jones' *multivalent theism*. Jones attempted to overcome this difference through his *reliance on psychology*, arguing that one of the criteria of consciousness is the ability to work for desired ends and that God, as ultimate consciousness, is working to establish the Kingdom. However, this strategy implicitly assumes universalism, because everyone is related to God through consciousness. This in turn marginalizes the unique mediating role of Christ. Jones also over-emphasizes the immanence of God and neglects God's transcendence. I suggested that this is partly because of his lifelong experience of God as immanent, his *experiential basis*, and partly because of his acknowledged difficulty in holding both of these aspects of God together, a difficulty that is related to his deliberate *theological naivety*. Finally, his use of the passage from *Changdoya* could be taken in isolation to imply that Jones embraced pantheism, an example of confusion arising partly from his *informal style*.

Two further points are worth noting. First, the above ideas about God's character, God's immanence and the way in which God should be sought are inter-related, meaning that although Jones' work is not systematic it is internally coherent. Thus, for example, a God characterized by love might be expected to be immanent, and therefore experience of this God will offer knowledge about God. Second, the important characteristic that arises from all the considerations above is that God is personal: the facts that God is characterized by love, has purposes that are good, and can be found through psychology all point to this. This conviction was certainly in line with the prevailing personalism, but for Jones was based on the personal nature of God apparent in the Bible and assumed by Quakers. For example, as noted in Chapter 2, Jones was convinced that God spoke to and guided his fellow-

Quakers, and for God to be able to communicate and have a plan, God is most naturally interpreted as personal.⁶⁶

In brief, Jones was convinced from his own experience and from the Bible that God was personal, and he attempted to make this belief consistent with the potentially impersonal God of Royce. His synthesis was successful in some areas insofar as it used insights about the nature of consciousness to attribute a personality and purpose to God. There are other areas, however, for example his universalism and lack of emphasis on God's transcendence, where he diverged from the core of conviction. One of the key implications of Jones' treatment of God as ultimate consciousness is that human consciousness is a finite expression of this ultimate consciousness. The next chapter thus focuses on Jones' understanding of human nature.

⁶⁶ See, however, Rowlands, ed., *God, Words and Us*, for a discussion about how today's non-theist Quakers approach this issue.

Chapter 5

Humans are socio-spiritual beings

The most fruitful outcome of the study of inner, personal life has been the revelation of inherent relationship.¹

In Christian theology, many key doctrines are related to how human nature is understood. How are individuals related to God? What is salvation and who effects it? How should the idea of sin in Genesis 1 be interpreted in the light of scientific discoveries? What is the relationship between human effort and divine grace? Jones' answers to all these questions, as we will see in this chapter, were coloured by his reliance on psychology.

Broadly speaking, he held two fundamental ideas in concert regarding human nature, both of which were psychologically informed. The first is that humans are social beings. Jones makes this conviction very clear right at the start of *Social Law*, writing in the Introduction that 'This idea, that personal life is of necessity *conjunct*, i.e., in an organic group, will appear in every chapter of this book'.² As noted in Chapter 3, the terminology 'conjunct' came from his Harvard lecturer G. H. Palmer, and it was explored in the light of psychological insights from James Baldwin's *Mental Development*, a book that showed how the social group influenced the development of self-consciousness.³ The second is that humans and God are inherently related. Jones argues for this based on psychological insights from James,

¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 16.

² Jones, *Social Law*, 17 (italics as in original).

³ Jones does not cite Baldwin's work explicitly but acknowledges it as having 'brought much light upon many of the matters here treated' (Jones, *Social Law*, 21).

in particular his theory of the subconscious. These starting points in psychology, however, meant that Jones frequently diverged from the core of conviction. His evangelical readers in particular were not slow to criticize him for this departure, and there are a number of letters in the Haverford archives written at about the time of *Social Law* that relate directly or indirectly to his views on human nature. Many of them have at their root Martin Davie's observation that 'Jones sees the possibility of direct personal experience of God as based on the nature and psychology of Man, whereas the Quaker tradition sees it as based on the supernatural activity of God.'⁴

One particular criticism (and it usually is a criticism rather than a commendation) that has been raised consistently since *Social Law* was written and that, as we will see, is related to Jones' use of psychology is that of humanism. Guy Aiken, for example, claims that Jones was often accused of being a 'mere' humanist; Douglas Gwyn associates him with an 'optimistic' humanism that was inadequate for a nuclear age; and Hugh Rock thinks that Jones was moving towards a 'fully humanist basis for religion'.⁵ Furthermore, because Jones was so influential within Quakerism, his views on this topic affected the Society as a whole: Damiano argues, for example, that as a result of Jones liberal Quakerism tends to be 'self-sufficient, humanistic and individualistic'.⁶ And, as William Thorpe pointed out in his 1968 Swarthmore lecture, a humanistic Quakerism represents a divergence from the Society's Christian roots.⁷ Jones himself, however, consistently insisted that he was opposed to humanism because it reduced humans to natural beings.⁸ Clearly, then,

⁴ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 106

⁵ Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?' 44; D. Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox (1624–1691)* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986), 215; Rock, 'Rufus Jones never did establish', 61.

⁶ K. Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: Eighteenth Century Quakerism as Realized Eschatology' (PhD thesis, The Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, Cincinnati, OH, 1988), 64.

⁷ W. H. Thorpe, *Quakers and Humanists* (Swarthmore Lecture 1968) (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1968), 10.

⁸ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 106.

Jones' use of psychology in relation to human nature is both important and open to misinterpretation.

Here, I try to ascertain Jones' views on various facets of human nature, namely consciousness, the subconscious, sin, salvation, habit and conscience (Sections 5.1 to 5.6, respectively). For each of these facets I first analyse how Jones attempted to synthesize psychological insights with traditional Christian and Quaker teaching. I then point out the strengths and weaknesses of his position and, where relevant, refer to letters from his readers to show where he was in conflict with the views of evangelical Quakers and the core of conviction. Broadly speaking, I will suggest that the picture presented in *Social Law* is that humans are socio-spiritual beings for whom altruism is as basic as selfishness and who are capable of self-improvement by their own effort. I argue, however, that Jones prevents this from becoming a secular humanism by virtue of the role he ascribes to God regarding consciousness, conscience and habit.

5.1 Consciousness

Self-consciousness lies at the centre of Jones' view of human nature: 'for all practical purposes the contrast between a *person* and a *thing* ... is clear enough. The fundamental contrast is the possession of *self-consciousness* by the *person* and the absence of it in the *thing*.'⁹ Note that this means that when Jones uses the term 'personality' he often has self-consciousness in mind.

5.1.1 Jones' view: *Consciousness originates in God*

Given Jones' dependence on James, it is worth noting here the different emphases in *Principles* and *Varieties*. In *Principles*, James wanted a scientific explanation for consciousness: 'The demand for continuity has, over large tracts of science, proved

⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 51.

itself to possess true prophetic power. We ought therefore ourselves sincerely to try every possible mode of conceiving the dawn of consciousness so that it may *not* appear equivalent to the irruption into the universe of a new nature non-existent until then.¹⁰ (This passage is, in fact, used as the epigraph in Peter Godfrey-Smith's recent book on the evolution of consciousness.¹¹) *Varieties* has a more metaphysical flavour at times, with James broadening his horizons beyond consciousness: 'the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come'.¹²

Jones himself endorsed both metaphysical and psychological explanations in relation to self-consciousness. On the one hand, consciousness is for Jones inexplicable: 'There is nothing simpler by which we could describe it. It itself is ultimate (at least to us), elementary and unanalysable.'¹³ Its origin, too, is a mystery: 'personality gets no sufficient *origin* in the phenomenal world; nothing here explains it.'¹⁴ This inherent mystery obtains because, for Jones, consciousness, as we saw in the last chapter, has its origin in God, a position that was in line with Royce's idealism: 'What we really have, when the person appears, is the self-consciousness of the world manifest at a focus point.'¹⁵ This picture presented in *Social Law* is retained throughout Jones' corpus. He claims in *Testimony*, for example, that 'We may have collateral connections with flat-nosed baboons, but at the same time we are of direct noumenal origin.'¹⁶ The closest he comes to an explanation is a passing comment, again in *Testimony*, that hints at panpsychism, as he surmises that one day it will be discovered that 'what we have been calling

¹⁰ James, *Principles*, 102.

¹¹ P. Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds: The Octopus and the Evolution of Intelligent Life* (London: William Collins, 2017), 1.

¹² James, *Varieties*, 515.

¹³ Jones, *Social Law*, 51–52.

¹⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 84–85.

¹⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 85.

¹⁶ R. M. Jones, *Testimony of the Soul* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1937), 70.

“physical” or “material” or “molecular” is vastly more interpenetrated by “spirit” than we have usually supposed.’¹⁷

Note that Jones was not alone in this view that consciousness was inexplicable: William James records that the opinion of many of his contemporaries was that ‘with the dawn of consciousness an entirely new nature seems to slip in, something whereof the potency was *not* given in the mere outward atoms of the original chaos.’¹⁸ Thus, while today some may find Jones’ determination to avoid a scientific explanation unsatisfactory, at the time it was not unusual. This is not to say that Jones denied that consciousness was related to activity in the brain; rather, he thought that science could never give the whole story. He acknowledges that ‘If we were able to look in upon the brain of our friend with magnifying eyes, we should see marvelous molecular motions going on among the cells.’¹⁹ To focus on this would, though, be missing the point, because ‘Where we saw a storm of activities in a brain-centre, [our friend] was overcoming a temptation or was thrilled with a rapture of aspiration.’²⁰ In other words, for Jones consciousness has its origin in God and is mediated, rather than produced, by the brain. In line with this, science can provide a description of what is going on, but can neither explain it nor capture its significance or meaning.

On the other hand, Jones draws on psychological theories to explain the *development* of self-consciousness. With a general citation to Baldwin and to Royce’s *Studies of Good and Evil*, he explains that it is only in the social group that the child learns the difference between ‘I’ and ‘thou’, ‘ego’ and ‘alter’, ‘self’ and ‘not-self’.²¹ He also quotes Royce as saying that if a child were to grow up without others ‘there is nothing to indicate that he would become as self-conscious as is

¹⁷ Jones, *Testimony*, 171.

¹⁸ James, *Principles*, 101.

¹⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 139.

²⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 140.

²¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 54.

now a fairly educated cat'.²² Thus, the development of self-consciousness in a given individual can be explained psychologically, even if its origin can not.

In summary, Jones' view of consciousness is based on the metaphysics of idealism and incorporates some insights from social psychology regarding its development. Although there is scant explicit biblical input, we saw in the last chapter that Jones sees ultimate consciousness, from which all consciousness derives, as reflecting Christian ideas about God's character and purposes.

5.1.2 Assessment of Jones' position

A number of criticisms of Jones' approach can be made. Those that pertain to the inherent relationship between God and humans implied by Jones' views will be deferred until Chapter 7 on the Inner Light. Here I focus on objections relating to his insistence that consciousness originates in God.

First, although Jones' views have to be seen in historical context, it may be felt to be inconsistent that, while he embraces scientific theories for the development of self-consciousness in an individual so enthusiastically and admits the correlation between brain activity and consciousness, he is convinced that no scientific explanation for consciousness will ever be found.²³ In this respect he faces problems similar to those apparent in arguments for God's existence that rely on a 'God of the gaps'. Here it is not so much the existence of God that is being predicated on the current absence of scientific knowledge, however, but the relationship of humans with God. Given that Jones' whole thought is based on this inherent relationship, it might be thought a very risky strategy to make the foundations dependent on the absence of a scientific explanation for consciousness. The fact

²² Jones, *Social Law*, 53.

²³ That said, there are a number of present-day philosophers and psychologists (such as Steve Pinker and Colin McGinn) who are dubbed 'new mysterians' because they believe that no explanation for consciousness will ever be found.

that Jones insists that consciousness arises in God, however, means that his understanding of humans is inescapably theistic rather than naturalistic.

Second, Jones' insistence that consciousness arises in God means that it is difficult to separate the creator from the created. This merging of humans and God is a departure from the core of conviction, and Jones' *theological naivety* means that he neither recognizes nor addresses this issue. Furthermore, Jones' treatment does not really explain how aspects of consciousness that are not God-like exist. The fact that individuals can have conscious thoughts that might be aimed at harming another, for example, surely implies that consciousness is not completely dependent on God. This problem, which is at root the lack of an explanation for sin, crops up, as will become apparent below, in one guise or another in many facets of Jones' views on human nature. Jones' approach can be contrasted with that of one of his contemporaries, H. G. Wood, who claimed that he was too aware of the reality of sin to be able to endorse an innately divine human nature.²⁴

Finally, the fact that Jones places such a premium on human consciousness means that he is open to accusations of anthropocentrism. In fact, this criticism can be made of the whole of his thought, built as it is on the necessity of listening to God and performing good deeds. There is no room in his scheme, for example, to explore what a redeemed creation might look like, just a redeemed human society. Here though, Jones is a child of his time, as the redemption of society was the emphasis seen in the Social Gospel movement, and ecological concerns and Christian responses had not yet made an appearance. That said, for Jones the moral nature of the universe comes to fruition in the moral nature of humans: 'We know only of a universe which includes man. The inevitable process of our world leads up to a being who is self-conscious, who has experience of values, and who reveals moral preferences ... When we talk of the cosmic universe, we must include in it the

²⁴ Thorpe, *Quakers and Humanists*, 15.

emergence of man and the processes of history.’²⁵ In other words, Jones might be expected to view the redemption of humans as in some sense incorporating the redemption of the universe.

In summary, Jones’ position has substantial flaws (it relies on the lack of scientific explanation for consciousness and does not explain how human consciousness can be decidedly un-God-like) and it diverges from the core of conviction (there is no separation between the creator and created, and no adequate treatment of sin). On the other hand, the fact that it is impossible for Jones to view humans apart from God means that accusations of ‘mere’ humanism are unfounded, a point to which I return in the Conclusion. The particular point of contact between God and humans within consciousness, and the subject of the next section, is the mysterious workings of the subconscious.

5.2 The subconscious

Jones was clearly fascinated with the subconscious, as he devotes a disproportionately large amount of space to its curious manifestations in *Social Law*. In later years, though, he admitted that he went too far in adopting James’ theories of its religious significance.²⁶ Both his early fascination and his later caution reflect shifts in the science of psychology itself, for example increased scepticism about psychic phenomena and the theories of Freud and Jung. The discussion here focuses on his chapter entitled ‘The Subconscious Life’.

²⁵ R. M. Jones, *The Nature and Authority of Conscience* (Swarthmore Lecture 1920) (Kessinger, [1920]), 16–17.

²⁶ Jones, *Middle Years*, 8.

2.1 Jones' view: The subconscious is the 'shekinah of the soul'

be rejected as a whole by one
who is prepared ^{to repeat} at his leisure
what David said is reported
to have said in his haste".
Look up Miss P's case Proc. S.P.R. Vol
V p. 507. and the dream in
Phantasms Vol II p. 687.
Tell the story of the sea serpent.
Scales story p. 157 foot note

The Evidence for telepathy could
not be based upon any one single
occurrence however striking, but
it is the sum total of the reputable
cases that is unanswerable.
It is not the single stick but
the fagot which cannot be
broken.

Figure 5.1 Extract from Jones' lecture notes on psychology (undated), HC Box 97.

The first part of the chapter consists mainly of manifestations of the subconscious at work. Jones' point seems to be that events that seem inexplicable – recurring dreams, predictions from crystal balls, the sudden ability to speak another language – are in fact all explained by the subconscious. Thus he provides anecdotal evidence of a recurring dream that was rooted in a long-forgotten childhood incident, of an image seen in a crystal ball that was actually an event registered subconsciously the previous day, and of a man 'of the lower classes' who on his deathbed suddenly spoke Greek only for it to be discovered that he had learned a few sentences of Greek as a child. Jones does not give source references, but it is possible that he consulted the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. This journal detailed numerous case studies and is referred to in Jones' lecture notes (undated,

see Figure 5.1). At least one example may have been lifted from *Principles*: Jones notes that a mother can sleep through rattling windows and traffic but wake up to the slightest movement of her baby, a phenomenon James draws attention to in *Principles*.²⁷

Jones' main interest, however, was in the religious significance of the subconscious. In this respect, it seems likely that he relied on two insights from James, one from *Principles* and one from *Varieties*. The first, for which there is no direct citation, relates to the operations of consciousness. In *Principles*, James discusses consciousness in terms of the brain-tracts that are excited: 'If recently the brain-tract *a* was vividly excited, and then *b*, and now vividly *c*, the total present consciousness is not produced simply by *c*'s excitement, but also by the dying vibrations of *a* and *b* as well.'²⁸ For James, the purpose of the illustration is scientific, namely to show that psychologists should pay as much attention to the relation between objects as to the objects themselves: 'We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*. Yet we do not.'²⁹

The second is James' metaphysical speculations in *Varieties*, which Jones quotes directly, where James says that 'there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we at any time are aware of ... The conscious person is continuous with a wider self'.³⁰

²⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 114 and James, *Principles*, 143.

²⁸ James, *Principles*, 161.

²⁹ James, *Principles*, 163.

³⁰ Jones *Social Law*, 134; see James, *Varieties*, 511.

consciousness. Around it (b) are the "dying peak" and the "dawning peak," i. e., the one which has *just now* prevailed, and the one which will succeed *next*. The thought of any moment is influenced by what is just dying out and by what is just coming in. This makes the "fringe" around the peak. Then (c) represents the "threshold" or horizon of consciousness. Submerged below this line there lies (d) the vast realm of the subconscious, which, for all we know, borders upon the infinite Life, *rises out of it*, and may receive "incursions" from it.

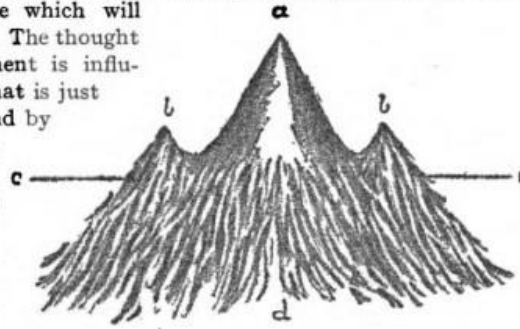


Figure 5.2 Jones' diagram of consciousness (*Social Law*, p.111). The beginning of the footnote on the verso page reads 'In the figure, (a) shows the "peak" of.....

Jones combines these two insights in the diagram reproduced in Figure 5.2, which appears in a footnote. Here, like James, he refers to 'peaks' (a) and (b) rising above a threshold (c), and notes that the 'thought of any moment is influenced by what is just dying out and by what is just coming in'.³¹ He adds an extra component, though, namely the 'vast realm of the subconscious' (d) that lies beneath consciousness, surmising that the subconscious is related to God: 'for all we know, [the subconscious] borders upon the infinite Life, *rises out of it*, and may receive "incursions" from it.'³² Furthermore, he ends the chapter with the suggestion that in the subconscious there may be 'some real shekinah where we may meet with that Divine Companion, that More of Life, in whom we live'.³³

Jones, then, offers a description of the human–divine relationship that likely drew on James' 'scientific' comments in *Principles* and his more metaphysical comments

³¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 111.

³² Jones, *Social Law*, 111.

³³ Jones, *Social Law*, 135.

on the subconscious in *Varieties*, but he replaces James' 'more' with the 'More of Life', the personal God of Christianity.

Jones also refers to poetry to describe this experience of God that arises in the subconscious, quoting Matthew Arnold:

Beneath the stream, shallow and light, of what we say we feel,
Beneath the stream, as light, of what we think we feel,
There flows with noiseless current, obscure and deep,
The central stream of what we feel indeed.³⁴

The poem is actually slightly misquoted (the line breaks and punctuation are not as in the original, and the first line should be 'Below the surface-stream...'), and there is no reason to associate the 'central stream' with God. (Indeed, given Arnold's atheism, it seems unlikely that he would have made this association in a Christian sense.) It does, however, convey Jones' conviction that our 'shallow' consciousness arises from a deeper, hidden consciousness, which he associated with God. As noted in Chapter 2, Jones' developing religious views owed much to poets, and his use of poetry here provides a good example of how he synthesized these early views with later psychological/metaphysical insights from James.

5.2.2 Reaction to and assessment of Jones' position

Regarding his use of a psychological insight from James to draw a spiritual conclusion, Jones could first be criticized for crossing epistemological boundaries. It is worth emphasizing in his defence, however, that he was in line with many psychologists who were speculating on the metaphysical role of the subconscious (see Chapter 3), and he is careful in his writing to make it clear that he is drawing analogies and pointing out similarities rather than offering rigorous proofs. Second, he is perhaps again unwise in linking the unexplained, namely the subconscious, to God. As noted above in relation to consciousness, he runs the risk of seeing his

³⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 110.

system collapse if an explanation for the subconscious is found. That said, James did in fact propose a use for the subconscious, that of making certain actions automatic,³⁵ and, as we will see below in Section 5.5, Jones gave a ‘spiritualized’ interpretation of this aspect of the subconscious, weaving it into his view of God-inspired transformation.

George Coe, who taught the psychology of religion at Northwestern University, Illinois, raised a further concern. While enthusing that ‘he would not know where to look for a better synthesis’ of the religious significance of psychology and metaphysics than *Social Law*, he admits that he is not totally clear about Jones’ position: ‘At one point you seem to hold that there may be a shekinah of divine revelation within the subconscious; at another you seem to test this subconscious revelation by the fully conscious experience.’³⁶ What Coe is objecting to is that a subconscious revelation supposedly from God is then subject to the authority of conscious thought. There is no record of how Jones replied, if indeed he did, in the Haverford records. Coe is correct, in that the fact that inspiration is not always divine is acknowledged on a practical level in *Social Law*; indeed, Jones devotes a whole chapter to discussing how one can discern which intuitions do actually come from God (see my Chapter 8). He does not, however, address this ambiguity theologically.

Post-*Social Law*, the biggest challenge to Jones’ position would come from the work of Jung and Freud, who, as Jones himself put it in 1937, had shown that the subconscious contained ‘hissing serpents as well as glorious birds of paradise’.³⁷ By this time, he had concluded that ‘we cannot yet, if ever, leap forthwith to the sound conclusion that God is assuredly most at home in regions which we cannot at

³⁵ Today, for example, there have been developments in this area, with some seeing the subconscious as a rapid process of assessing a situation that aids survival. See, for example, D. Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2012).

³⁶ George Coe, 7 April 1905, HC Box 9.

³⁷ Jones, *Testimony*, 61.

present explore'.³⁸ Although Jones eventually distanced himself from James' view of the subconscious, he does not, as far I am aware, attempt to replace the 'shekinah' of the soul located in the subconscious in *Social Law* with another explanation of how God and humans are related. Given the centrality of this idea for his overall scheme and its eventual acceptance by liberal Quakers, this represents a weakness in his thought and legacy.

In summary, Jones' *reliance on psychology* means that he used James to suggest that the subconscious was the shekinah of the soul. His view does not take into account theologically the fact that often what arises from the subconscious may not be 'of God', and it encountered further problems from psychology itself post-*Social Law*. His failure to address these issues is an example of his *theological naivety*. Furthermore, this interpretation, in which the possibility of experience of God is a natural ability, captures Jones' memories of growing up in a Quaker community in which God was always a felt presence and is therefore an example of his *experiential basis*. Notably, it diverges from the core of conviction.

5.3 Sin

Sin and salvation are closely related concepts. Very broadly speaking, if sin is seen primarily as an offence against God that has hell or eternal damnation as a consequence, then it requires supernatural help to overcome it (e.g. to 'forgive' or 'defeat' it), and salvation is seen in terms of eternal life in heaven. If sin is human weakness, then it involves (but is not necessarily restricted to) human strategies to overcome it, and salvation is seen in terms of improved character and/or a more ethical society. This section on sin and the next on salvation are therefore closely related.

³⁸ Jones, *Testimony*, 61.

5.3.1 Jones' view: *Sin is a fact of consciousness*

There are two main passages about sin in *Social Law*. The first occurs in the context of a discussion of the Inner Light, where Jones is concerned to stress that Quakerism teaches that the truths of Christianity, here sin and salvation, are to be apprehended by each individual. He quotes George Fox to this effect: 'I was commanded to turn people to the inward Light that they might *know* their salvation.'³⁹ In fact, Jones is so passionate about this understanding of sin that he resorts to capitals to get his view across: 'SIN IS A FACT IN CONSCIOUSNESS; not a doctrine which logic establishes from Adam's sin.'⁴⁰ In concert with this, God's grace and forgiveness are real not because they occur in Scripture but because 'THEY ARE ETERNAL FACTS OF THE DIVINE NATURE, which any human soul may experience.' As far as sin and salvation are concerned, the point is that, for Jones, they are both matters of experience rather than of doctrine. They are true because they are 'witnessed within', not because 'some man in sacred garb has announced it, or because I have read in a book that such an experience *might be mine*'.⁴¹

The second discussion of sin takes place towards the end of the book, where Jones is attempting to explain how the preceding chapters relate to sin and the need for redemption.⁴² Three main points can be identified. First, sin is defined in relation to God and God's plans for society: it is an act 'which is aimed at the structure of society and at the entire Divine Order'. Note that there are some similarities to Jones' Harvard lecturer G. H. Palmer here, in that Palmer defined iniquity as the tendency to set the individual against the conjunct.⁴³ Jones, as noted, extended the understanding of 'conjunct' to apply to God, and saw God as having plans for society, so there is a corresponding extension in his ideas about sin to include the

³⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 170.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 170.

⁴¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 172.

⁴² The quotations in this paragraph are all from Jones, *Social Law*, 250–252.

⁴³ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 86.

setting up of the individual against both society and God (which are in any case related for Jones). Second, the process of overcoming sin forms one's character: the inward dispositions that cause sinful actions are to be 'put down and triumphed over', and by so doing an individual 'gains a new degree of goodness'. Third, sinners are still very much part of God's world – it is just that they display the point at which Divine harmony is disturbed. In broad terms, then, Jones is defining sin in terms of the aims of God, which we saw in the last chapter was building the kingdom of God. As per the Social Gospel, this involves transforming individuals within a transformed society.

In addition to these two expositions of sin, Jones also discusses the related concept of egoism. Here the discussion is in the context of the development of self-consciousness in the child. He makes the point that human life is group life in the sense that virtues require the existence of others. 'You cannot sympathize without "another" – another whose inner life you can appreciate and with whom in some real sense you can share.'⁴⁴ Likewise, the so-called 'egoistic tendencies' also require others. Pride, for example, requires another person to compare oneself against. Although Jones does not mention sin in this discussion, he is presumably criticizing the doctrine of original sin and perhaps referring to evolutionary theory when he draws the conclusion that 'There is no truth at all in any view which makes egoism more primitive or fundamental than altruism. They are born together and neither can claim the birthright.'⁴⁵

In summary, Jones sees sin as a tendency that opposes God's aim of building the kingdom. It therefore has a liberal Christian framework in that it is based on experience, science (i.e. evolution and social psychology) and the Social Gospel rather than on a literal interpretation of Genesis 1.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 57.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 57.

5.3.2 Reaction to and assessment of Jones' position

Jones' treatment of sin as an inevitable outcome of evolution/social development and as a matter of experience rather than doctrine, and perhaps more significantly his relatively light emphasis on it, troubled his evangelical letter writers in a variety of ways. J. H. Douglas, for example, focused on the atonement, thundering that 'Sin must be seen and felt with all its awful and eternal condemnations of the Holy Law of God and Jesus and His blood be seen as the only escape from Hell.'⁴⁶ S. A. Wood was more troubled by Jones' attitude to Scripture: 'If thee believes that the story of creation in the Bible is trustworthy and that the story of temptation and fall of man is not a "myth" as John Hicks says it is, let us know. In short we want to know whether thee believes the Bible or not.'⁴⁷

A more general assessment of the liberal position can be found in a 1902 article in *The British Friend*, which worried that 'Those who have begun to assimilate the thought of Evolution are specially liable to experience a weakening of the sense of sin, and in consequence of the desire for salvation.'⁴⁸ Even the modernist Thomas Hodgkin, who had chaired the session on science at the Manchester Conference, believed that sin was more than a result of our evolutionary heritage: 'By all means let the elimination of the bestial nature be conceived of as going forward in humanity ... But there will remain in the possibilities of the human character something darker, subtler, more malignant: a poison not of the flesh but of the intellect.'⁴⁹

A further insightful and wide-ranging criticism can be found in a letter from Esther Pritchard. Her letter to Jones was written in 1900, so before the publication of *Social Law*, but her criticisms of his treatment of the origin of sin are pertinent here.

⁴⁶ J. H. Douglas, 17 November 1898, HC Box 3.

⁴⁷ S. A. Wood, 27 November 1899, HC Box 3.

⁴⁸ *British Friend*, 'Personal salvation' March (1902): 52.

⁴⁹ T. Hodgkin, *Human Progress and the Inward Light* (Swarthmore Lecture 1911) (London: Headley Brothers, 1911), 16.

Pritchard had chaired the Woman's Missionary Conference of Friends in 1888, and the report on the conference (written by the editor of the evangelical *Christian Worker*) states that the tone was that 'Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls was at the front' and praises a talk on the necessity of accepting 'baptism with the Holy Ghost as a qualification to execute the great commission'.⁵⁰ It is therefore reasonable to conclude that, if nothing in the intervening years convinced her otherwise, Pritchard had a low opinion of humanity's natural goodness.

Her letter is somewhat long-winded and the cursive script is difficult to read in places (see the original and transcript in Appendix C).⁵¹ Her main point is that she wants to retain the biblical account of how sin originated: 'I am very slow to receive a theory that wipes out the record of creation & of man's first disobedience & of the promised seed, & makes Gen I-III children's legends.' She goes on to make a number of interesting points regarding this question of biblical authority that are still being debated today. The first is that she wished that 'scientists would be content to stay on their own ground & not invade the domain of theology with their generalizations'. This position of independence is exemplified in recent times by Steven Jay Gould's 'non-overlapping magisteria' (see Chapter 3 on the Manchester Conference). The gist of the second point (which is especially difficult to decipher) is that Christianity should be trusted because Christians have for centuries had 'conquests in the realm of grace' and have won 'trophies in the field'. Science, however, is still in its 'swaddling clothes' and should not be allowed to 'jump into the saddle'. Today, science is no longer in its swaddling clothes, but the general thrust of Pritchard's complaint is apparent in the arguments of those, like Marilynne Robinson for example, who object to the fact that the attribution of authority solely to science negates the 'voice of any ancient poet, saint, or visionary on the far side of the threshold who has attested to his or her own sense of the holy'.⁵² In essence,

⁵⁰ C. W. Pritchard, Woman's Missionary Conference of Friends. *The Independent* (1848–1921) 40: 14.

⁵¹ Esther Pritchard, 23 February 1900, HC Box 5 [Appendix C].

⁵² M. Robinson, *Absence of Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 7.

then, Pritchard is criticizing Jones' treatment of sin because he does not accept biblical authority and promotes scientific authority.

It is also notable that Jones' evangelical readers had different ideas from him about what activities were 'sinful'. J. H. Douglas, for example, condemns activities such as 'card playing, dancing, theatre going. Secret societies for both men and women. Clubs for women', without considering inner motives.⁵³ Jones, however, felt that there was some ambiguity in recognizing sin. Self-seeking inevitably involves self-sacrifice, he observes. We have to surrender one thing to gain another, so that 'all altruism is more or less egoistic; all egoism is more or less altruistic'.⁵⁴ The result of this is that 'Many a canonized saint has been egoistic.'⁵⁵ Here again it is possible that he is drawing on James, who notes in *Principles* that selfishness can be mistaken for saintliness: 'If it be the "other-worldly" self which [a man] seeks, and if he seeks it ascetically, – even though he would rather see all mankind damned eternally than lose his individual soul, – "saintliness" will probably be the name by which his selfishness will be called.'⁵⁶ Jones' approach to sin is thus more psychologically nuanced than approaches that see sin purely in terms of behaviour, but this may not have been appreciated by Douglas.

Finally, one of the most common accusations levelled against Jones, both at the time and since, is, as noted, that he did not take sin seriously enough. There are a number of factors that might have influenced Jones in this respect. First, his views were in line with the wider Christian liberal optimism of the time. Second, he admired Clement, who as Jones himself points out (see Chapter 2) had none of the 'tragedy' of the Hebrew view of sin. Third, he was inspired by the generally optimistic view of human nature exemplified by his Haverford teacher Pliny Chase (see Chapter 2): Chase's interpretation of the Quaker concept of the Inner Light

⁵³ John H. Douglas, 13 February 1903, HC Box 7.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 101–102.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 102.

⁵⁶ James, *Principles*, 209.

meant that he saw the nucleus of man's inner life forming 'a living junction with the Eternal Reality of the universe', and Jones took this as meaning that individuals could be 'set burning with a light of truth and a warmth of love that reveal God', and that human life was given 'a new glory and a noble dignity'.⁵⁷ In later years, the two World Wars gave him (along with liberal theologians generally) pause for thought, but he maintained his optimistic view of human nature. No doubt referring to his meeting with the Gestapo (see Chapter 1), he commented that 'We have seen in new and awful light in our times how low in the scale man can sink ... I personally saw and dealt with the most debased men in the list. Christ saw a similar depravity in man [but] He kept His hope and His faith that God and man belonged together, as branches belong to a vine.'⁵⁸

Note that Jones does not mention sin in relation to judgement or punishment, a position that was in line with his emphasis on God as love (see Chapter 4). This takes us to the subject of the next subsection, namely Jones' understanding of salvation.

5.4 Salvation

5.4.1 Jones' view: *Earthly joy in union with God*

It is notable that Jones does not link salvation with heaven. As far as I am aware, he does not speculate on the specifics of heaven anywhere in his corpus, although he seems to assume that eternal life is a natural progression for everyone: 'If rather the body is only a medium for giving temporal manifestation to that which is essentially spirit, the falling away of the body may be only a stage in the process, like the bursting of the chrysalis by the insect which was *meant* to have wings and

⁵⁷ Jones, *Life in College*, 29.

⁵⁸ Jones, *A Call to What is Vital* (New York: MacMillan, 1960), 112.

to live on flowers.⁵⁹ Rather, he links salvation with an experience of God in this life, insisting that salvation 'is to be witnessed as an actual experience'.⁶⁰ He goes on to suggest what this experience might feel like: 'freedom from the sense of sin, joy in union with the Infinite Spirit, peace through forgiveness'.⁶¹

A more biblically based treatment of salvation is found in the final chapter of *Social Law*, where it is seen in terms of the human–divine relationship. Here Jones asserts that the profound prayer in Ephesians, which asks that 'Christ may dwell in your hearts that ye may *be filled to all fulness with God*' shows that 'salvation is not only the *product* of the resident Divine Life – it *is* the resident Divine Life in a human life'.⁶² Furthermore, he claims that 'a study of Paul's use of "faith" will show that this Divine–human idea permeated his entire conception of salvation in all its stages'.⁶³ Note that Jones approaches biblical authority in terms of the *experience* of the biblical authors, not in terms of biblically derived *doctrine*: Jones is of the opinion that Paul's understanding of faith, which permeated his conception of salvation, was not learned but 'had its birth rather in his own personal experience'.⁶⁴

5.4.2 Reaction to and assessment of Jones' position

Jones' attribution of authority to experience may be in line with the Quaker tradition, but he does not consider the possible weaknesses in this position, namely that positive feelings might be dependent on good health, a full stomach or a sanguine disposition, that negative ones might depend on poor self-esteem, and that it is possible that neither reflects ontological reality.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 84.

⁶⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 170.

⁶¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 171.

⁶² Jones, *Social Law*, 256.

⁶³ Jones, *Social Law*, 257.

⁶⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 257.

Furthermore, there is also a sense in which his views diverged from the core of conviction and evangelical Quakerism. Henry Newman, for example, was worried about the incipient universalism in Jones' view of salvation. Newman was a prominent Quaker who supported the modernist agenda – it was Newman who, as we saw in Chapter 3, had written to Jones about the Manchester Conference and encouraged him to disseminate the proceedings. He was eminently tactful in his criticism, implying that Jones perhaps had not appreciated the implications of his formulation. 'There is a side current running through [Social Law] that puzzled me in receiving it, & it was a line of thought that seemed to run up to the conclusion that somehow all souls are going to be ultimately saved', he ventures, continuing that 'I do not mean that I think thou states this in thy book, but thou appears to leave the "way open" for scholars to draw this possible conclusion.'⁶⁵ For Newman, this goes against Scriptural teaching that 'immortality is only in God, only in Christ'. Even though Newman has perhaps missed the point of what Jones meant by salvation, he is correct in identifying the universalism inherent in Jones' thought. For the divine–human relationship and immortality to be anything less than universal would require Jones to revoke the idea that human consciousness originates in God and that the human–divine relationship is mediated by the subconscious. In other words, as already noted, Jones' divergence from the core of conviction is caused by his *reliance on psychology*, and his *theological naivety* means that he does not address the issue.

In summary, by approaching sin and salvation from the point of view of personal experience, Jones diverges from the views of evangelical Quakers, who emphasized Scripture in addition to experience. Essentially, his treatment means that all humans are ontologically 'in the same boat', as it were. There is no sharp dividing line between 'saved' and 'condemned', between 'saint' and 'sinner', just differences in the extent to which individuals experience salvation on earth. This in turn means

⁶⁵ Henry Stanley Newman, 22 December 1904, HC Box 8 [Appendix C].

that the role of Christ is marginalized, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter. This view also raises the question of the means by which one can overcome sin.

5.5 Habit

Self-improvement was a popular theme in American Christianity at the time of *Social Law* and had a multi-faceted relationship with psychology, as discussed in Chapter 3. The next two sections focus on two means to self-improvement that can be identified in *Social Law*, namely the formation of habit and the role of conscience.

5.5.1 Jones' view: *Habits make goodness second nature*

Jones' discussion of habit occurs within the context of his discussion of the subconscious. It is highly likely that he relied on James, although he does not refer to him or provide a reference. James felt that psychology had a responsibility to facilitate self-improvement and urged his fellow psychologists to respond to the expectations of the public by teaching and providing therapy.⁶⁶ Many Christians embraced in particular James' chapter on habit in *Principles*, to the extent that the president of Brown, W. H. P. Faunce, told a Yale audience in 1908 that the chapter had been 'preached in a thousand pulpits',⁶⁷ and, as noted in Chapter 3, Jones was struck by the awe it provoked in his students. Habit was presented as arising from willpower, an ethos that chimed with a widespread conviction that the secret of 'character' was self-mastery and self-control.⁶⁸ Clearly, this was a view that resonated with humanism and liberal Christianity more than with evangelical interpretations of Christianity.

⁶⁶ E. B. Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1983), 184.

⁶⁷ Holifield, *Pastoral Care*, 187.

⁶⁸ Holifield, *Pastoral Care*, 188.

James writes that habits are formed because of the plasticity of the organic material of which bodies are composed. Thus, in the brain, 'A path once traversed by a nerve-current might be expected to follow the law of most of the paths we know, and to be scooped out and made more permeable than before.'⁶⁹ James emphasized the utility of this phenomenon. Habits result in the 'saving of trouble' because 'to reproduce the effect, a less amount of the outward cause is required'.⁷⁰ He offers practical suggestions arising from this observation regarding how new habits can be formed, for example advising 'Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life.'⁷¹

Jones adds a 'spiritual' dimension to James' psychology by linking habit to choosing the good. Drawing an analogy with how writing self-consciously makes the writing lose its grace and flow, Jones posits that the aim for individuals is to make the choice of goodness natural rather than strained: 'Happy is the man who not only has won the skill of body by his habitual exercise, but has also by his choices and decision gained a moral dexterity of the soul so that it has become second nature to choose the good! ... i.e., truth-telling and righteousness have become subconscious.'⁷² The practice of forming good habits, then, makes a person good.

Furthermore, Jones overlays his optimistic view of human nature on James' discussion of the effect of habits. James points out that we become drunkards by many separate drinks and saints by many separate acts, because 'Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar.'⁷³ In his treatment, however, Jones neglects the vice and focuses on the virtue, claiming that 'Every victory confers power for further victory ... The things that once were hard duties ... we now do almost by second nature.'⁷⁴ In other words, whereas James mentions virtue

⁶⁹ James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 76.

⁷⁰ James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 75.

⁷¹ James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 87.

⁷² Jones, *Social Law*, 121.

⁷³ James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 89.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 83.

and vice, Jones refers only to victory, which from the context is spiritual and related to virtue.

This view is again in line with Chase's optimistic view of human nature (see Section 5.3 above). It also reflects Clement's concept of a 'harmonized man', namely someone who 'has the vision of God, and whose life is harmoniously *adjusted* to God's purposes',⁷⁵ and the example of his Uncle Eli, who convinced Jones that a good character was formed by doing good deeds.

5.5.2 Assessment of Jones' position

Jones, as noted, was often branded a humanist, and although the commentators in question invariably omit to define what they mean by the term, it seems likely that two of the factors they had in mind were Jones' optimistic view of human nature and his conviction that one could acquire good character through effort. In relation to the latter, for example, it could be argued that Jones leaves God out of the picture: good character can be attained by forming good habits, which is a natural process related to the propensity of nerve currents to traverse the same path, without recourse to divine help. I suggest, however, that Jones incorporates God into the picture in a number of ways. For example, the decision to foster good habits is related to ideals, which have the power to inspire and motivate. Jones assumes that it is ideals that help the human race progress towards goodness, and then states that this shows that 'the spirit in us corresponds with an Absolute Self-conscious Life in whom all our ideals of worth and goodness are at once realities'.⁷⁶ We could of course object that not all ideals are good, and that not everyone would want to follow those that were, but the point here is that for Jones the inspiration for establishing good habits ultimately originates in God. Furthermore, as will be

⁷⁵ Jones, *Clement*, 19.

⁷⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 218.

discussed in Chapter 6, Christ provides the ultimate example of an ideal that inspires people to live lives that build the kingdom of God.

It is also the case that Jones sees the formation of good habits within the wider context of a spiritual universe. The 'physical universe', he says, has 'a running-down system' (i.e. hot bodies cool down, organisms die).⁷⁷ In the spiritual life, by contrast, 'the gains from our deeds are conserved and builded into the advancing power of life'.⁷⁸ This phenomenon finds expression in the Bible: 'Every victory confers power for further victory. In Paul's great phrase, which is literally true: "We are more than conquerors"'.⁷⁹ In other words, James' views on habit are, for good habits, given a biblically authenticated pedigree, and the resulting increase of goodness is a spiritual principle woven into the universe itself.

In summary, accusations of humanism, and the associated implied divergence from the core of conviction, are partly down to Jones' *reliance on psychology*. (Recall from Chapter 3 that, similarly, many liberal Christians were being accused of using psychology to turn Christianity into self-realization.) However, the fact that Jones sees habit in relation to God means that accusations of humanism based on the role of human effort need to be examined carefully. The fact that commentators do not always recognize this may be due in part to Jones' *informal style*, in that he does not always make it clear that he views humans as spiritual beings in a spiritual universe, a point I return to in Chapter 9.

But how does an individual know what good habits to foster? This question is discussed in the next section insofar as it relates to conscience.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 82.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 83.

⁷⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 83.

5.6 Conscience

Conscience is often associated with the Inner Light (see Chapter 7), although they are not necessarily identical and the relationship envisaged between them has changed over time. Early Quakers, for example, located the Light in the conscience, but often asserted that the Light was a supernatural function and conscience a natural one.⁸⁰ As noted in Chapter 2, the importance of conscience for Quakers is exemplified by John Woolman, known as the ‘gentle conscience of Quakerism’.⁸¹

5.6.1 Jones’ view: Conscience has human and divine aspects

For Jones, conscience is the means by which God’s will is known and obeyed. It is a composite divine–human faculty, and his treatment thus diverges from that of early Quakers. Its divine component is attested to by the fact that it does not seem to originate with the person: ‘When it speaks, the voice does not seem our own. Rightness and wrongness and the sense of oughtness, are deeper than any human plummet can sound.’⁸² Further evidence that this attribute is from God can, for Jones, be found in the fact that all naturalistic attempts to explain it have failed: ‘We cannot discover its origin either in the race or in the individual.’⁸³ Moreover, there is a sense of progress related to conscience. As he put in his 1920 Swarthmore lecture *The Nature and Authority of Conscience*, ‘Great moral geniuses ... push the common ideal of goodness a stage further on, and by degrees the whole race is raised to that height.’⁸⁴ Given that for Jones genius involves contact with God, we can infer that this progress is God-ordained.

Conscience is also, however, a human faculty formed by the particular social and cultural norms to which an individual is exposed: ‘Each individual’s concrete

⁸⁰ Angell, S. W. ‘God, Christ, and the Light’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015): 159.

⁸¹ Woolman, *Journal*, loc. 147, Kindle.

⁸² Jones, *Social Law*, 122.

⁸³ Jones, *Social Law*, 99.

⁸⁴ Jones, *Conscience*, 68.

conscience is “formed and filled” by the social and personal experiences of the lifetime. The atmosphere of the home into which the infant comes ... the habits, traditions, manners, contagious ideas of the family group – all these things begin to form a conscience which will always bear its nurture marks.’⁸⁵ It also involves reason. This influence is not brought out particularly strongly in *Social Law*, but is clear in *A Service of Love in Wartime*, in Jones’ discussion of the problems that Quaker boys faced when conscripted. He makes the point that whereas one class of conscientious objectors were satisfied if they themselves did not have to kill, others objected to the whole system of war. For this latter class, conscience was not a ‘mystically-conceived inward voice’ that allowed them to be part of the army but not to kill, but was ‘closely linked with common sense and reason, and with certain definite ideas as to what kind of action makes for progress and perfection of life and what does not’.⁸⁶

Conscience, then, is for Jones a divinely instituted inner voice that one feels compelled to obey, but this voice is informed by society and thoughtful, reasoned consideration of a concrete situation. His view is thus the synthesis of an important Quaker concept with an experience of ‘oughtness’, an emphasis on reason, and a psychologically informed understanding of society.

5.6.2 Reaction to and assessment of Jones’ position

Not all Quakers agreed with Jones’ proposed reliance on reason. On the one hand, Quakers of a quietist disposition viewed reason as unnecessary when it came to obeying God. W. L. Martin wrote to Jones expressing the hope that the role of reason would be subsumed under direct guidance: ‘[the great Lord] will have a chosen people who will live near Him, who will only move as he moves and directs, whose ministry will have none of the reasons of man in it’.⁸⁷ On the other hand,

⁸⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 122–123.

⁸⁶ R. M. Jones, *A Service of Love in Wartime* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 89–90.

⁸⁷ W.L. Martin, 17 December 1896, HC Box 1.

evangelical Quakers viewed the human capacity to reason with a certain amount of caution when it came to discerning God's will. The Richmond Declaration, for example, says that 'We own no principle of spiritual light, life, or holiness, inherent by nature *in the mind* or heart of man'.⁸⁸ So both quietist and evangelical Quakers might have regarded Jones' reliance on reason as 'humanistic' because it was unnecessary or unreliable, respectively. Furthermore, for evangelical Quakers, Jones' view diverged from their biblically inspired beliefs.

I will return to this topic from a different angle in the chapters on the Inner Light and Mysticism (Chapters 7 and 8), but the point to note here is that, contra purely humanistic interpretations, conscience for Jones had a divine 'depth' and compulsion about it. Furthermore, it was conditioned by but went beyond social norms because it was one of the means by which God guided individuals to build the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how Jones synthesized insights about human nature from psychology, liberal Christianity and Quakerism. I have explored how he understood consciousness, the subconscious, sin, salvation, habit and conscience in relation to God, pointing out the weaknesses of his arguments and where he diverged from the core of conviction and from evangelical Quakerism.

Jones' position can be summarized as follows. Human consciousness is an expression of God's consciousness, although society plays an essential part in its development, and the subconscious is where God and humans meet. Sin is not a doctrine but a fact of experience. Insofar as it is associated with egoism, it developed, along with altruism, as humans evolved. However, Jones brought God

⁸⁸ The Richmond Declaration of Faith, available at <http://www.quakerinfo.com/rdf.shtml> (italics mine).

into the picture by defining sin as a turning away from God's purposes (which were in turn associated with building the Kingdom) to the desires of the individual self. Correspondingly, salvation involves primarily a felt relationship with God in this life rather than eternal life in heaven. Habit and conscience are both routes to the formation of good character. Jones seems to have relied on James's psychological analysis of habit, but he 'spiritualizes' James' treatment: the fact that good habits transform a person so that they are good in their inward parts, and the fact that 'every victory confers power for further victory' reflect for Jones the spiritual nature of the universe.⁸⁹ Finally, conscience is formed by society and involves reason, but God is ultimately responsible for the sense of otherness involved in the feeling of 'ought' and for the fact that individuals who follow their conscience can draw humanity to new heights. God, then, is central to Jones' formulation of human nature.

In spite of the importance Jones placed on God, some of his Quaker readers were unhappy. They objected to his acceptance of evolution, to his universalism, and to his reliance on reason. All these criticisms are rooted in his *reliance on psychology* (although his readers did not always recognize this, see Chapter 9). For example, sin did not originate with the 'Fall' but is a natural part of an individual's development. Universalism, reflected in the fact that all humans are related to God through consciousness, replaces individual salvation obtained by responding to Christ. Inspiration from God occurs in the context of socially informed reason rather than through an inner voice unrelated to the world.

In addition, Jones can undoubtedly be criticized for his optimistic view of human nature. This optimism was partly historically contingent, given the emphasis on self-improvement and liberal optimism in general. It was also in line with that strand of Quakerism that emphasized particularly strongly that humans did not have a

⁸⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 83.

‘congenital seed of sin’ but ‘a seed of God’.⁹⁰ It is also arguably related to the *experiential basis* of his own faith. In *Life in College*, Jones attributes his optimism to ‘the slowly fructifying product of a deep-lying faith in a loving and victorious God’.⁹¹ Here Jones is talking about optimism in life in general – but for Jones optimism about life is closely associated with an optimistic view of human nature, because he believed that God worked through individuals to change the world.

Regarding the divergence of this view from the core of conviction, it is notable that by the time he wrote *The Church’s Debt to Heretics* in 1924, Jones had linked his view of human nature with Pelagianism. Far from condemning Pelagius as a heretic, however, Jones enthuses that ‘Pelagius had a “modern” outlook and habit of mind. For him, Grace is infused into and through all that God has done in creation and in history. He felt little need of looking for magical interventions and for divine schemes to “restore” a ruined universe, since he did not believe it to be ruined.’⁹² I will return to this point in relation to Jones’ Christology in the next chapter.

In light of the above, what can we say about the attributions of humanism from Gwyn, Aiken, Rock and Damiano cited at the beginning of this chapter? Their comments are reflections on Jones’ thought as a whole, but given that *Social Law* is a representative work, I address them briefly here. Their comments need to be seen in relation to the fact that Jones himself insisted that he never endorsed a purely secular humanism. In *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers*, for example, he is clear that ‘If anyone supposes that Friends have inclined to be “humanists” and to assume that man is so inherently good that he can lift himself by his own belt into a life of consummate truth and beauty, he has not yet caught the deeper note of the Quaker faith.’⁹³ And in a 1932 sermon he denounced ‘the prevailing humanism of

⁹⁰ As exemplified by Pliny Chase in Chapter 2. See also Jones, *Social Law*, 173; Jones, *Faith and Practice*, 27.

⁹¹ Jones, *Life in College*, 136.

⁹² Jones, *Heretics*, 127.

⁹³ Jones, *Faith and Practice of the Quakers*, 50.

our times' but endorsed 'a lofty type of Christian humanism' that believed that there is in humans 'a beyond within'.⁹⁴

Definitions of humanism are nebulous and multi-faceted, but I focus here on one aspect, namely whether Jones believed that humans could transform themselves and society by their own efforts. Gwyn accuses Jones of an 'optimistic' humanism inadequate for a nuclear age. I suggested above that this optimism derives from Jones' view of God, however, a point that is not acknowledged in Gwyn's comment. I suspect, too, that Jones himself would have denied that his view was inadequate for a nuclear age, simply because, as noted, he saw God as guiding human decisions and leading humanity forwards. Furthermore, he declared that the ability to win and practice an optimistic frame of mind was a spiritual gift that Quakers could offer to the world.⁹⁵ Rock claims that God language is a gloss on Jones' humanism, but my analysis here suggests that, on the contrary, God is fundamental to Jones' view of human nature. Aiken states that Jones was branded a 'mere' humanist, but does not cite any examples, and in view of the centrality of God in his thought it is hard to envisage how such a label could be applied to Jones with any degree of conviction. Finally, Damiano's accusation that Jones' humanism was self-sufficient and individualistic also seems wide of the mark, given the importance Jones attributed to God and the social group (seen here and discussed further in Chapter 8). Overall, then, I suggest that accusations of humanism arise because commentators neglect how Jones incorporates God into his understanding of human nature. In part, as will be discussed further in Chapter 9, this is because of his *informal style*.

In brief, I have suggested that in *Social Law* Jones presents humans as socio-spiritual beings. For example, consciousness and conscience originate in God but are shaped

⁹⁴ R. M. Jones, *Lighted Lives*. A sermon preached in Trinity Church, Boston, 11 December 1932. Available at <http://www.qhpress.org/quakerpages/qhoa/rmjll.htm>, accessed 11 November 2016.

⁹⁵ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 152.

by society, and it is God who in conjunction with human effort provides the ability for humans to transform themselves and society. He diverged from the core of conviction because his *reliance on psychology* means that everyone is related to God through the subconscious, and because sin and salvation are not doctrines but experiences. In later years Jones regretted his reliance on James' theory of the subconscious, but maintained his belief that humans and God were inherently related. Jones' view of humans as socio-spiritual beings raises questions about the role of Christ though, so the next chapter asks whether his opinion that humans are related to God through their subconscious makes Christ redundant.

Chapter 6

Christ reveals God and sets ideals

Jesus Christ is the supreme channel in human history for the personal communication of God.¹

Jones' view of Christ has been criticized repeatedly over the years. After reading *Social Law*, for example, Henry Newman, editor of the British Quaker journal *The Friend*, wrote to Jones worrying that the book was diverging from the view that 'Salvation is only in Christ'.² Four years later, Rendel Harris scribbled a brief warning to Jones on the subject of Christ, probably in relation to the proofs of Jones' book *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909). He promises further discussion at the upcoming Yearly Meeting but cautions that 'Thy book will be of great service: but the quotations must be verified & certain dangerous tendencies warned against. Thee will see it for thyself in going about. A Christless Quakerism will neither save itself nor the people.'³ More recently, Guy Aiken wrote an article entitled 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?' in relation to Jones' legacy, and Carole Spencer complained that Jones 'severed the inward light from Christ'.⁴ And yet Jones self-identified as a Christian, and he made the orthodox-sounding claims that in Christ 'God and man came together in a single, undivided life' and that Jesus Christ was

¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 253.

² H. S. Newman, 22 December 1904, HC Box 8 [Appendix C].

³ Rendel Harris, 12 May 1908, HC Box 11 [Appendix C].

⁴ Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?'; Spencer, *Holiness*, 204.

the 'supreme channel for the personal communication of God'.⁵ Jones' understanding and presentation of Christ, then, require careful analysis.

Some of the difficulties associated with interpretations of Jones' Christology are apparent if we compare the picture presented in *Social Law* with that in two roughly contemporaneous works: *Practical Christianity*, which we encountered in Chapter 4, and *The Double Search*, published in 1906, which deals with God's search for us and our search for God. Briefly, the description of Christ in *Practical Christianity* has an evangelical feel to it – Christ is eternal, forgives our sins, is the way to God, and lives in union with the Christian. In *Social Law*, I will suggest, these biblically based doctrinal-sounding formulations are still apparent, but Jones' attempts to make Christianity consistent with psychology occasionally cause him to diverge from them; for example, Christ is related to God in the same way as humans, and there is no sense that he is the second person of the Trinity. In *The Double Search*, the biblical references all but disappear, and the *consistency* between psychology and Christological doctrines that is demonstrated in *Social Law* is upgraded to an attribution of *authority* to psychology: 'I believe', states Jones near the beginning of the book, 'that no psychological discovery has ever thrown so much light upon the meaning of the atonement and prayer as this fact of the conjunct life does'.⁶ *Social Law* thus presents an interesting transition point for Jones' attempted synthesis in relation to Christology and the authority he attributed to psychology.

The diversity of these formulations in the early years of the 20th century is perhaps one reason why it is generally acknowledged that Jones' Christology, and thereby the relationship he envisaged between Quakerism and Christianity, is open to a range of interpretations. The decades that followed certainly did not bring clarity. In 1927, for example, he prefaced his book *The Faith and Practice of Quakers* with a

⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 253.

⁶ Jones, *Double Search*, 14.

quotation from Dean Inge stating that 'The Quakers, of all Christian bodies, have remained nearest to the teaching and example of Christ',⁷ thereby explicitly associating Quakerism with Christianity. An article published in the *London Friend* in the same year entitled 'New light on the Inner Light', however, sets the discussion of God dwelling within in terms of a philosophical Kantian framework that does not even mention Christ.⁸ Jones thus seems to have valued the teaching and example of Christ, and saw Quakerism as Christian, but perhaps partly as a result of his *informal style* and desire to assimilate modern thought he does not express this consistently.

A further source of ambiguity is caused by Jones' *theological naivety*, namely that he does not discuss the nature of Christ with respect to traditional doctrines, such as that in the Chalcedonian definition. As noted previously, Jones taught Christian history, wrote about the Church Fathers, and authored *The Church's Debt to Heretics*, so was aware of Christological ideas and terminology, but they are conspicuous by their absence in his writings. To complicate the matter further, it needs to be borne in mind that when Jones does talk about the union of two natures in Christ, he is approaching this union from the perspective of the 'conjunct' nature of humans and God that he took to be revealed by idealism and psychology rather than in the 'more technical' sense of the two natures of Christ as envisaged in the Chalcedonian definition. Consider, for example, the statement in *Social Law* that in the incarnation 'God and man came together in a single undivided life'.⁹ Taken at face value, this could be read as conforming to the Chalcedonian definition: Christ has two inseparable natures, one divine and one human, which are both preserved in one person. We will see below, however, that this is not what Jones had in mind. Rather, as Davie puts it, Jones diverges from the core of conviction because he held that 'what took place in Christ was a union between God and Man that resulted in the existence of one nature that was both Divine and

⁷ Jones, *Faith and Practice*, epigraph

⁸ R.M. Jones, 'New light on the "Inner Light"', *The Friend* June 10th (1927): 533–534.

⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 19.

human'.¹⁰ Jones clearly felt that this psychologically informed approach was more satisfactory than traditional ones: as he put it in *The Double Search*, 'Modern psychology and recent studies of social life have made us familiar with a deeper view of human personality and have prepared for a more adequate study of Divine personality than was possible when the historic creeds were formulated.'¹¹

The literature on Jones' Christology is sparse. It consists of a few general criticisms from evangelical Quakers,¹² some general descriptions of Jones' Christology in PhD theses, and the above-mentioned recent paper by Guy Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?' My conclusions are, broadly speaking, in line with those of Aiken insofar as he claims that Jones saw Christ as historically but not ontologically unique and viewed the atonement in terms of the 'moral influence' theory. I differ, however, from Aiken's conclusion that Christ's example is not necessary because humans are in any case related to God. Although this is a valid corollary of Jones' view of how God and humans are related in *theory*, he did not seem to hold this view in *practice*. I will suggest that, at least according to the books discussed here, Jones saw Christ's example as essential to a transformative Christian life.

The discussion of Christ in *Social Law* is sparse, so the analysis here is relatively brief. The first section draws on the few scattered comments that do appear to analyse various elements in Jones' Christology. Then, as an interim summary, in the second section I draw together some of the material in this and the previous two chapters in order to provide an overview of how Jones viewed Christianity.

¹⁰ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 107.

¹¹ Jones, *Double Search*, 23–24.

¹² William Pinkham, for example, spoke for many evangelicals when he criticized Jones for not adhering to biblical teaching and insisted that God does not dwell in someone who does not have faith in Christ (Angell, 'God, Christ and the Light', 168); Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?'.

6.1 Elements of Jones' Christology

Here I discuss a number of elements of Jones' Christology, namely the incarnation, the atonement, the sense in which Christ can be said to dwell within an individual, and the extent to which Christ is necessary for a relationship with God. My approach is to compare the treatment of these elements in *Social Law* with their treatment in *Practical Christianity* and *The Double Search* in order to try to ascertain how Jones' thought, or, perhaps, his expression of that thought, developed during the first decade of the 20th century. I start, though, with some general comments on these two additional books.

6.1.1 Some comments on Practical Christianity and The Double Search

Both liberal and evangelical Christological formulations are apparent in *Practical Christianity*, a fact that has its origin in the book's genesis. As noted in Chapter 4, *Practical Christianity* consisted of Jones' editorials in *The American Friend*. What is of interest here is that this journal arose out of the merger of two earlier journals with very different audiences, namely the evangelical *The Christian Worker*, edited by Walter Malone and read mostly by Quakers in the west, and the more liberal *The Friends Review*, which Jones had edited since 1893 and which was read mostly by Quakers in the east.¹³ Partly as an attempt to promote unity between these two strands of Quakerism, Jones and Malone decided to merge the journals in 1894, with the new publication, *The American Friend*, to be edited by Jones.¹⁴

Understandably, it was a difficult task to produce a journal that appealed to the wide-ranging views of the merged readership, especially after 1897 when Jones embraced the modernist cause.¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, the letters Jones received suggest

¹³ Jones, *Middle Years*, p.23

¹⁴ Financial considerations and falling circulation may have been additional factors. For a discussion of the merger and of the differences between Malone and Jones, see J. Oliver, 'J. Walter Malone: "The American Friend" and an evangelical Quaker's social agenda', *Quaker History* 80 (1991): 63–84.

¹⁵ A letter from John B. Garrett to Isaac Sharpless on 21 March 1901 warns that Quakers in the West were unhappy and thinking of starting their own journal. This would disrupt the Society, writes

that he favoured the liberal position. The liberal Thomas Newlin was supportive, for example, reassuring Jones that he was 'succeeding admirably' in a difficult position, but perhaps hinting that he wished Jones would move more quickly towards liberalism in his comment that 'The truth must often be given in small doses'.¹⁶ Eight years later, in 1904 so at the time of *Social Law*, Jones had perhaps indeed picked up the pace, giving cause for concern to the evangelical William Pinkham: 'Those who know thy antecedents must feel confident that thy early education was such as to make thee acquainted with the fundamental principles of the Christian faith as held by evangelical Christians the world over' he starts, before complaining vehemently that 'thy articles display either ignorance of these principles or the questionable tactics of a debater in misrepresenting them'.¹⁷ Edward Grubb, a British Quaker editor himself, and therefore no doubt familiar with the problems of keeping a diverse readership happy, summed up Jones' problems with a cheerful limerick in the same year: 'An American editor, Rufus, / Each Monday encountered a new fuss. / Correspondents like bees, / Deprived him of ease, / But he cornered them all – Good old Rufus!'¹⁸

Jones' articles in *Practical Christianity* display many traditional Christian assertions, and some have an almost credal feel about them. For example, Jesus is perfectly human and perfectly divine (p.13), God generated the Son from eternity, and death did not end Christ's life (p.17). Furthermore, Christ forgives an individual's sins (p.16) and is a source of power for the Christian (p.10), forming their character and keeping them from sin (p.13). Jones favours a liberal exemplarist rather than a substitutionary view of the atonement though, claiming that an individual is drawn to God by Christ's example: 'his own heart is touched, so that he sets his face,

Garrett, and prevent 'the accomplishment of the purpose which Rufus has often said is the only one which justifies him in his editorial work – the unification of Friends in America' (HC Box 5).

¹⁶ Thomas Newlin, 5 July 1896, HC Box 1.

¹⁷ William J. Pinkham, 12 November 1904, HC Box 8.

¹⁸ Edward Grubb, 14 November 1904, HC Box 8.

through love to this Christ' (p.8). He continues, however, that it is impossible to say what the atonement meant from the perspective of God.

The Double Search is concerned with God's search for us (the atonement) and our search for God (prayer), and as such it provides one of the fullest expressions of Jones' Christology. Jones' aim for this slim volume was certainly ambitious, namely to 'show how the historical Christ, as a revelation of God, fits into a cosmic system of evolution and how He is related to the Spirit that witnesses with our spirits'.¹⁹ Here Jones is less constrained by a partly evangelical readership: there is less of a credal feel in his writing, and he relies on experience, idealism and psychology to make his case. 'Modern psychology', he confidently but vaguely asserts, has shown that God needs us and that 'our lives are mutually organic'.²⁰ He also uses scientifically informed analogies to illustrate his claims about Christ, for example claiming that the way Christ lives in a believer is a process of assimilation similar to the way an oak tree absorbs sunlight. This is a long way from some evangelical formulations that involve repentant sinners accepting Christ into their hearts resulting in an ontological change in status before God.

My aim here is to try to ascertain Jones' Christology in *Social Law*, and to compare this with his more 'evangelical-sounding' formulations in *Practical Christianity* and more 'scientific-sounding' ones in *Double Search*. I start with the incarnation.

6.1.2 The incarnation

Throughout his writings, Jones never wavers in his conviction that Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God. In *Practical Christianity*, he tells his readers that 'There has been in our world but one Person who was perfectly divine and perfectly human. He revealed God and He showed what it means to be a son.'²¹ Similarly, in *Social Law*, he writes that 'Jesus Christ is the supreme channel in human history for

¹⁹ Jones, *Double Search*, 22.

²⁰ Jones, *Double Search*, 24.

²¹ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 13.

the personal communication of God.’²² Again, in *Double Search*, ‘[Christ] reveals God as a Father whose very inherent nature is love and tenderness and forgiveness.’²³

The issue at stake here, though, is that ‘revelation’ is not necessarily the same as identity, and ‘supreme’ is not necessarily the same as ‘ontologically unique’, so we are left with the question of what Jones actually meant by these statements. One way to answer this question is to focus on how Jones justifies them. It might be expected, for example, that a statement made on the basis of a biblical text would have different implications and resonances from one based on the latest social psychology. Here, then, I consider the different bases of authority in the three books in order to see whether they result in different implications regarding the uniqueness of the divine–human relationship exhibited in the incarnation.

In *Practical Christianity*, Jones tends to make statements about Christ but not to justify them. For example, in the article ‘The Father and the Son’, he writes that ‘There is but one God ... from eternity God generated the Son, who is the express image of His person.’²⁴ Later in the same article, he affirms that ‘The death of the body in no way ended the Life. Christ, the Word of God, has never ceased to be, and He is proved to be the Son of God by the power of His endless Life.’ These statements presumably have a biblical basis, but this is not made explicit. They have a ‘doctrinal feel’ about them, and it is possible that Jones was influenced here by the Richmond Declaration of Faith and/or by his evangelical upbringing. On the whole, then, the picture of the incarnation in *Practical Christianity* is broadly consistent with that of evangelical Christianity. References to the eternal nature of Christ and statements such as ‘There has been in our world but one person’ suggest that Christ is ontologically unique.

²² Jones, *Social Law*, 253.

²³ Jones, *Double Search*, 68.

²⁴ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 17.

In *Social Law*, the question of how Jesus is related to God is inextricably tied up with Jones' theory of human nature, specifically his belief that God and humans are conjunct. Thus in *Social Law* he asserts that 'The fact of the Incarnation ought to settle the question for all who accept it as a fact. *It* declares forever that the sharp duality of natures is impossible. Here God and man came together in a single, undivided life.'²⁵ He continues that 'Our latest science completely fits this testimony and confirms it. It finds everywhere common aspects in God and in man.' Here, then, the inherent relationship between God and Christ is a given 'fact' and is used to validate Jones' claim that humans in general are inherently related to God. What Jones is doing is emphasizing the *consistency* between the incarnation and the findings of 'science' (presumably the psychology of Baldwin, Royce and James) as they relate to human nature. Crucially, however, in doing this Jones has redefined the traditional understanding of the incarnation that sees Jesus as the second person of the Trinity. Because the human–divine relationship the incarnation entails obtains in all humans, Jones is perhaps giving Christ a special status, but the 'undivided life' that he exhibits is no longer unique. Perhaps because of his deliberate theological naivety and informal style, though, he does not address the implications of this bold move.

In *The Double Search*, Jones is explicit about giving authority to psychology when it comes to interpreting the incarnation. Asking whether Christ was man or God, Jones identifies the problem as being that 'The difficulty in almost all the theological discussions on the subject has been that they started with God and man isolated, separated, unrelated ... Modern psychology and recent studies of social life have made us familiar with a deeper view of human personality and have prepared for a more adequate study of Divine personality than was possible when the historic creeds were formulated. We know that God and man are *conjunct* and that neither

²⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 19.

can be separated absolutely from the other.’²⁶ This starting point of the human–divine relationship as conjunct means, he explains, that ‘there are no metaphysical difficulties in the way of an actual incarnation of God. It is rather what one would expect.’²⁷ Here, then, the psychological evidence that is being used is the same as in *Social Law*, but, from the way that the argument is constructed, Jones is even more confident in the authority of ‘modern psychology’. That is, while in *Social Law* it is the fact of the incarnation that validates the psychology, here it is psychology that shows that all humans and the divine are related, and this in turn sheds light on the incarnation. Furthermore, the implication is that this psychological knowledge is to be trusted more than ancient theological formulations. So in *Double Search*, Christ’s nature, because it is treated in terms of the human–divine relationship exhibited in all humans, again has a fragile claim to ontological uniqueness.

There are two related points to be made here. First, claims for Christ’s ontological uniqueness are weakened from *Practical Christianity* to *Social Law* and *Double Search*. Second, this shift corresponds to the progression from unjustified doctrinal statements in *Practical Christianity*, to the consistency of doctrinal statement and psychology in *Social Law*, to the authority of ‘modern psychology’ in *Double Search*.

A number of comments can be made regarding this somewhat unusual use of psychology. First, it is an overstatement to say that we now know that humans and God are conjunct, as Jones claims. This will be discussed further in the chapters on the Inner Light, but note, for example, that although this may have been the conclusion of some psychologists, others, as previously noted, used psychology to argue that God did not exist. Second, as discussed in Chapter 4, Jones’ appeal to ‘our latest science’ and ‘modern psychology’ requires further justification if it is to be used to draw conclusions about God, as the personalist Bowne appreciated. It is something of a leap to go from the insights of social psychology to assertions about

²⁶ Jones, *Double Search*, 23–24.

²⁷ Jones, *Double Search*, 36.

the relationship between Christ and God. Finally, Jones' optimistic assertion that this psychologically informed view of humanity dispenses with the metaphysical problems of the incarnation is premature: as noted, he himself came to regret his dependence on James in later years.

Jones' interpretation comes under discussion in at least two Swarthmore lectures. It was endorsed by Edward Grubb (author of the limerick quoted above) in 1914.

Grubb does not mention Jones by name, but summarizes the main message of *Social Law*, concluding with the assertion that psychology has been teaching us that our personality is developed by 'the interpenetration, mainly in the sub-conscious region, of our own personality with that of others, and most of all by communion with the Universal Spirit.'²⁸ For Grubb, psychology's discovery of the subconscious means that 'there may well have been depths beyond depths in the personality of Jesus Christ, depths of relation to God and to the whole of humanity which did not appear to others, and of which He Himself, in His humiliation, may have only been dimly and fitfully conscious.'²⁹ It is notable that, far from seeing this as pushing the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy, Grubb sees it as countering the old accusations that early Quakers were diverging from Christianity: this new understanding 'removes altogether the ancient difficulty that in saying Christ is the "Light" or "Seed" in men we are reducing Him from a person to a principle'.³⁰

The theologian H. G. Wood, who delivered the Swarthmore lecture six years later, was, however, more critical. 'To look for the decisive religious influence in the subconscious or the unconscious seems to me a mistake', he asserts. 'The suggestion that the seat of Divinity in Christ is to be found in His subliminal consciousness does not attract me. It is the manifestation of God in Christ's human consciousness, especially in His thought and in His will, that constitutes the

²⁸ E. Grubb, *The Historic and Inward Christ: A Study in Quaker Thought* (Swarthmore Lecture 1914) (Bishopsgate: Headley Brothers, 1914), 78.

²⁹ Grubb, *Historic and Inward Christ*, 77–78

³⁰ Grubb, *Historic and Inward Christ*, 78

Incarnation.³¹ Wood makes a valid point: Jones does not address the issue of why Christ's will should be perfectly aligned with God's will while human wills need to win 'spiritual victory' (see Chapter 8), nor the implications of this difference for the uniqueness of Christ.

Various questions arise from this view of the incarnation. The first to be considered is why the atonement is necessary if humans and God are already conjunct.

6.1.3 The atonement

Jones was familiar with traditional theological atonement theories but disliked them, intensely. He complained that they were 'crude literal views' that offered a purely mechanical view of a transaction.³² His evangelical readers had no such qualms, however, with many subscribing to a substitutionary view. Jones highlights the different understandings in *Middle Years*, where he quotes a letter from one of his 'watchful critics' who informed him in no uncertain terms that 'Jesus Christ was sent into the world *for no other purpose* but to be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world by shedding his blood on Calvary.'³³ The view that Jones himself adopted corresponds, as Aiken points out, most nearly to the 'moral influence theory of atonement', in which Christ draws individuals to God by the power of his life.³⁴ Jones expresses this conviction differently in the three books though.

In *Practical Christianity*, Jones explains in his editorial 'Coming to God' that from the human side the atonement is made when an individual's 'heart is touched, so that he sets his face, through love to this Christ, to begin a new life as a child of God'.³⁵ From God's perspective, however, he insists that what the atonement meant is 'not our question or our concern, and we do not wish to explore it or pronounce upon it'. In 'The Father and the Son' there is perhaps a rare hint of his evangelical

³¹ Wood, *Quakerism and the Church*, 74.

³² Jones, *Middle Years*, 90.

³³ Jones, *Middle Years*, 88.

³⁴ Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?', 42.

³⁵ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 8.

heritage, in that Jones alludes to the death of Christ, not just his power to attract individuals, as being significant: 'we must not speak as though we could tell what took place in the death of this unparalleled Personality, but in this gift of Self, atonement is made for us.'³⁶ But he still notably fights shy of substitutionary theories.

In *Social Law*, Jones expands on the exemplarist explanation that he undoubtedly favoured. Rather than make his case theologically, however, he again appeals to the discoveries of psychology: first in relation to suffering and second in relation to ideals. In relation to suffering, Jones claims that Christ's suffering and his life illustrate that 'the deepest note of the Gospel, – namely, that Christ suffers with us and for us, – is also the deepest fact of all life'.³⁷ He continues that 'the prophet felt the truth, Christ revealed it in the culmination of His life, and now our social ethics has come upon the same truth by an independent path of scientific study'. Although Jones does not provide a reference citation, it is certainly possible that the 'scientific study' he had in mind was found in James. The above statement comes at the end of a discussion in which Jones is describing an ascending scale of self-sacrifice from mothers to patriots to saints before concluding that 'the higher the person in the scale of the spiritual life the more insistent will be the calls to self-sacrifice'.³⁸ This hierarchy resonates with a similar one in James' *Principles*, which states that, 'In all ages the man whose determinations are swayed by the most distant ends has been held to possess the highest intelligence. The tramp who lives from hour to hour ... and finally, the philosopher and saint whose cares are for humanity and for eternity, – these range themselves in an unbroken hierarchy.'³⁹ Note that if Jones was indeed indebted to James here, he has 'spiritualized' James' observations. The latter's reference to 'intelligence' is changed to the more

³⁶ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 17.

³⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 101.

³⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 100–101.

³⁹ James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 20.

spiritually charged notion of 'self-sacrifice', and James' chain of examples of people who exhibit ever-increasing self-sacrifice is extrapolated to Christ. Whatever the source of Jones' observation though, it is clear that he is saying that one aspect of the atonement, namely the suffering and self-sacrifice of Christ, is consistent with an insight from psychology. Furthermore, this suffering draws humans to God because it reveals God's suffering over us: 'Yes, [Christ] has led or *drawn* men, but He has done it by unveiling God to us and by showing us the Father, not as a Sovereign, not as a stern Judge – but as Infinite Lover who yearns over us and who *suffers* through our sin and blindness.'⁴⁰

In relation to ideals, Jones points out that the ability of humans to respond to an ideal, which is a crucial part of the exemplarist theory, is also explicable psychologically. In *Principles*, James draws a distinction between the passive movement of inanimate objects that are operated on by '*a tergo*' (from behind) forces and living objects that have the ability to choose and pursue future ends under the influence of '*a fronte*' (in front) forces.⁴¹ Similarly, Jones differentiates between *a tergo* forces ('The moon moves the tide. The wind blows down the tree'⁴²) and *a fronte* ones. It is this latter type, he says, that is responsible for spiritual development.⁴³ In particular, the spiritual life that has become available in Christ is attained when a person sees an 'ideal standard' and rises to it 'through effort and discipline'.⁴⁴ In other words, the fact that individuals are drawn to Christ is coherent with the *a fronte* forces identified by psychology, and it is not necessary for Christ to be a substitutionary sacrifice.

In *Double Search*, Jones proposes an explanation of the atonement that is fairly similar to that in *Social Law*: '[Christ] is the pattern in the mount, the *a fronte* force

⁴⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 253–254 (italics as in original).

⁴¹ James, *Principles*, Vol. 1, 10.

⁴² Jones, *Social Law*, 71.

⁴³ Jones, *Social Law*, 71–72.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 265.

which has drawn the individual and the race steadily up to their higher destiny.⁴⁵ He supplements this with a few comments about how the atonement should be interpreted. He complains that 'No one can carefully study the theories of the atonement which have prevailed at the various epochs of Christian history without discovering that there has been in them a very large mixture of paganism. They have been deeply colored by mythology and by the crude ideas of primitive sacrifice.'⁴⁶ Jones envisaged a better way: 'We shall abandon illustrations drawn from law courts and judicial decisions and we shall rise to conceptions which fit the actual facts of inward, personal experience ... The drama will not be in some foreign realm, apart from human consciousness.'⁴⁷ In other words, Jones wanted an explanation that is based on psychology.

A weak point in Jones' reliance on an exemplarist explanation of the atonement is that his belief that the human and divine are conjunct implies that everyone should find the example of Christ attractive. Clearly, not everyone does. Jones' solution to this problem is characteristically practical rather than theological. In *Practical Christianity*, the emphasis is on the necessity of creating conditions in society that enable people to live good lives: 'The tramp who crawls up to the back door for his unearned meal, and the drunkard who reels home to turn a family circle into an earthly hell, are both products of our social system, and there can be no pious ease for the church until such a system is destroyed.'⁴⁸ Here he is in line with the prevailing thought of the Social Gospel movement in that he is advocating removing social barriers to advance the kingdom of God. In *Social Law*, although it is not stated explicitly with respect to the atonement, Jones' overall aim is to demonstrate that psychology is consistent with Christianity because he recognizes that some

⁴⁵ Jones, *Double Search*, 35.

⁴⁶ Jones, *Double Search*, 59.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Double Search*, 83.

⁴⁸ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 7.

Christians felt that their faith was being undermined by modern thought. Here, then, he is concerned with removing not social but intellectual barriers.

In summary, regarding the atonement we again see a progression in the authority given to psychology. In *Practical Christianity*, with its joint evangelical/liberal readership, Jones avoids the question, refusing to 'speculate'. In *Social Law*, he 'spiritualizes' a passage possibly taken from James to show how Christ's suffering is *consistent* with the psychological insight that the call to self-sacrifice increases with one's spiritual maturity, and he explains how a person is drawn to Christ in relation to the psychologically validated vector of '*a fronte*' ideals. In *Double Search*, Jones wants to find an explanation of the atonement that draws on psychology, thereby to some extent attributing *authority* to psychology.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Jones dispenses with the objective necessity of Christ's death, proposing a view that is most similar to the 'moral influence theory'. Indeed, in *Heretics* Jones links this theory to Abelard, who denied that expiation was necessary and presented the work of Christ as 'vital and spiritual'.⁴⁹ This, for Jones, meant that, 'Here in germ, if not something more, is the profoundest modern view of the atonement.' But this approach raises the question of how Christ exerts this influence and to what extent knowledge of him is necessary.

6.1.4 Is Christ necessary?

As we saw in the last chapter, Jones was often associated with humanism, which on some understandings has a concomitant marginalization of the need for Christ. Damiano, for example, asserts that Jones promotes 'an over-reliance on human capabilities rather than the need for Christ as mediator between God and humanity'.⁵⁰ Aiken explores this question, asking whether Jones retained the

⁴⁹ Jones, *Heretics*, 195.

⁵⁰ Damiano, *On Earth as it is in Heaven*, 65.

necessity of Christ's moral example, and answering with an unequivocal 'No, he does not'.⁵¹ He justifies his answer by pointing out that the 'the divine-human light, or reason, or capacity for infinity intrinsic to human nature, proves sufficient for turning persons away from "sin" and toward the "Unchangeable Good".' There are certainly passages in Jones' corpus that support this assertion, and I discuss the relationship between Christ and the Inner Light further in Chapter 7. I suggest here, however, that Aiken's question and answer cannot do justice to Jones' thought in this area – primarily because they neglect the emphasis Jones placed on ideals as an intrinsic part of the development of consciousness and because they assume that the divine and natural realms can be separated, whereas Jones sees them as continuous.

As noted above, Jones attached a great deal of importance to ideals. In *Social Law*, he emphasizes that Christ is the supreme revelation of God, and part of what this means is that Christ established ideals that were far and above any others: 'It fills one with awe and wonder to see how his truth and wisdom and spiritual insight outstrip the stock of the ages behind him and move on ahead of the foremost files of after generations. He brought and continues to bring a new quality of life into humanity.'⁵² The issue is undoubtedly complex, but the importance Jones laid on ideals suggests that, when assessing the necessity of Christ, we need *in practice* to look beyond whether the human-divine light is *in theory* 'sufficient for turning persons away from "sin"', as Aiken puts it. In other words, while Aiken is correct to point out that in Jones' view humans have the capacity to know God directly, it is also the case that this capacity is mediated in practice through ideals in society, and that the best of these ideals are established by Christ. This need for Christ is spelled out even more clearly in an analogy in *Double Search*. Just as someone wanting to know about music would turn to a Mozart or Beethoven rather than to a 'boy with a

⁵¹ Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?', 43.

⁵² Walters, *Essential Writings*, 111 (extract from *the Eternal Gospel*).

harmonica', so the 'supreme education of the soul comes through an intimate acquaintance with Jesus Christ of history'.⁵³ That said, at times Jones seems to imply that Christ's influence can be felt at second-hand, observing that 'this Life has, profoundly or remotely, touched every personal life in Europe'.⁵⁴ What he is perhaps saying here is that Christ's ideals are reflected in society, so individuals might be aware of them and be affected by them even if they do not appreciate their origin.

In view of these ambiguities, it is useful to approach the question from another angle and ask how God initiated the incarnation. In *Social Law*, Jones asserts that, 'By [Christ] God came to humanity and through Him was expressed the Type toward which personal life should move.'⁵⁵ This implicitly acknowledges God's role in initiating the incarnation, and sees it as part of the gradual development of humanity towards the 'Type' of Christ. In *Double Search*, Jones' perspective is much grander. He sees Christ as the inevitable revelation of God in a universe that has God at its heart: 'The moment it is settled that there is a divine Person as the ultimate reality of the universe, it is also settled that He will reveal Himself ... that He will find His joy in "working all things up to better," to use Clement's phrase.'⁵⁶ This revelation could only come about once consciousness had arisen, he says, which allowed a 'new kind of evolution' to begin.⁵⁷ For centuries before Christ there was a 'Christ ideal', which 'lighted the sky for the future'⁵⁸ until Christ came as 'the type and goal of the race ... a revelation of what man at his height and full stature is meant to be'.⁵⁹

⁵³ Jones, *Double Search*, 45.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Double Search*, 35.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 253.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Double Search*, 26.

⁵⁷ Jones, *Double Search*, 29.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Double Search*, 34.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Double Search*, 34.

Jones is thus in line with Clement, in that 'the Incarnation was the breaking forth in a definite person of the God who had through all previous history been an immanent Word and who had all along been preparing for such a consummation'.⁶⁰ Hence, although there is certainly a case for saying that Jones thought that Christ was not necessary on account of the conjunct relationship between humans and God, it seems that in practice Jones thought that Christ was necessary in two senses – first from a human perspective, because Christ set ideals that go far beyond any others, and second from God's perspective, because the incarnation is an inevitable outcome of the unfolding of the universe made fundamentally spiritual by the immanent Word.

6.1.5 Christ within

A further way of approaching Jones' Christology is to explore how he sees individuals as being related to Christ. We can ask, for example, whether Jones distinguishes between Christ and God 'dwelling within' an individual. This distinction is potentially informative because it is related to the uniqueness of Christ. Paul refers to the indwelling of both Christ and God, which is a reflection of the divinity he attributes to Christ. If Jones talks in terms of God dwelling within, but of Christ as inspiring ideals in the same way that any person might do, then this would suggest that Christ is no different ontologically from humans regarding his divinity.

Unfortunately, Jones' position is obscured because of the language he uses to describe 'Christ within'. This ambiguity is best illustrated by a passage in *Middle Years*. Jones is referring to an early editorial, in which he had written that, 'It is the direct contact of a living Christ with the soul of man that effects the change [i.e. gives them power to live by]'.⁶¹ This statement would presumably have satisfied his evangelical readership of the time regarding the divinity of Christ. He goes on,

⁶⁰ Jones, *Clement*, 16.

⁶¹ Jones, *Middle Years*, 94.

however, to dissociate himself from a literal interpretation of these words, clarifying that 'I used the words "living Christ" in those days to express the fact that God is actually here operating in us as a dynamic Presence, and that it is the same God in character and purpose that the Christ of Galilee and Judea revealed in the days of the Incarnation.'⁶² This statement could arguably be taken to mean that God could be operating in us even if the historical Christ had never lived, and it is not obviously compatible with an understanding of Christ as the second person of the Trinity.

To return to the three books under consideration here. In *Practical Christianity*, Jones seems to be absolutely clear that a Christian must have Christ dwelling within: 'Until Christ is in a man's life and organic with his deepest self ... the man is not in the truest sense a Christian.'⁶³ This is far more important than belief in the sense of intellectual assent to an idea about Christ: '*Union with Christ, and not an opinion about Christ*, is what we mean.'⁶⁴ Jones does not discuss what he means by 'union' in metaphysical terms, but he is in line with evangelical Christianity. Given his later hedging in regard to terminology, however, we should perhaps treat his assertion with caution.

In *Social Law*, there is no talk of union with Christ; rather, Jones describes the experience of being strengthened: 'We see something new come into us ... We go from the belief in a report to an experience of power at work upon us.'⁶⁵ It is ambiguous where the power comes from though: is it from Christ or God? Jones explains that the founders of Quakerism identified this power with 'the Eternal Christ come again to human consciousness'.⁶⁶ The fact that he makes this statement in terms of early Quakers, who, he says, reached their interpretation 'without much critical analysis', perhaps implies that he is distancing himself from this

⁶² Jones, *Middle Years*, 94–95.

⁶³ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 11.

⁶⁴ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 11 (*italics as in original*).

⁶⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 222.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 166.

interpretation to some degree, but again his position is not clear. In another passage, he quotes Paul as saying 'Christ liveth in me',⁶⁷ which sounds orthodox enough. But he then adds in a footnote that 'Christ, for Paul, means the Divine Nature as revealed in Christ'. In the light of Jones' understanding of the relationship between Christ and God discussed above, the footnote arguably puts Christ on the same level as any other human, because, as we have seen, the Divine Nature is part of (and is therefore revealed) not only in Christ but in all humans.⁶⁸

Likewise, in *Double Search* the emphasis is on the transformation of the person. Although knowledge of the historical Christ is important, it is the presence of God that is emphasized: on the one hand, 'the supreme education of the soul comes through an intimate acquaintance with Jesus Christ of history';⁶⁹ on the other, 'whether we use the expression Holy Spirit or Christ within or spiritual Christ, we mean God *operating upon human spirits and consciously witnessed and appreciated in them*'.⁷⁰ So Christ as the second person of the Trinity does not dwell within, even if the language that is sometimes used (i.e. Holy Spirit/spiritual Christ) suggests that he does.

Jones continues to use a variety of expressions in later years, but it is unlikely that his understanding changed. When he is addressing a Quaker audience, for example, he tends to revert to expressions that are more in line with those in *Practical Christianity*. Thus, in his 1908 Swarthmore lecture, he proclaims that 'Our supreme testimony, as a Society has been the testimony of the *real presence* of Christ, as an ever-living Spirit who reveals Himself to all souls of vision and loyalty.'⁷¹ Likewise, even in 1927, Jones writes in *The Faith and Practice of the Quakers* that 'Friends have always exalted Christ. They have been as eager as any Christians to know the

⁶⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 255.

⁶⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 255.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Double Search*, 45.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Double Search*, 47 (italics as in original).

⁷¹ R.M. Jones, *Quakerism, A Religion of Life* (London: Headley Brothers, 1908), 17 (italics as in original).

facts of the gospels ... But, like St. Paul, they are most concerned with the inward Christ. He is the source of their life and power.'⁷² Both of these passages could be taken to imply that Christ dwells within, possibly as the second person of the Trinity, but given my analysis in the previous sections and his reflections in *Middle Years* above, it is unlikely that this is what he meant.

There are also different attributions of authority used by Jones in each of the three books in relation to the idea that Christ, or God, dwells within. In *Practical Christianity*, Jones defers to Paul regarding the necessity of union with Christ, informing his readers that 'Paul at once fixed upon this as the central truth of Christianity'.⁷³ The source of authority here, then, is biblical. In *Social Law*, Jones also cites biblical passages as authoritative, but with a slightly different emphasis. It is the experience of God as expressed by biblical authors that is authoritative. Referring to Paul, for example, he says that 'A study of Paul's use of "faith" will show that this Divine-human idea permeated his entire conception of salvation in all its stages. The significance which he gives this word was not learned in the rabbinical school, it was not absorbed from the intellectual atmosphere of the period; it had its birth rather in his own personal experience.'⁷⁴ In *Double Search*, Jones uses an extended biological analogy to show how different people are transformed to different extents:

[A century-old oak tree] is forever drawing upon the streams of sunshine which flood it and it builds the intangible light energy into leaf and blossom and fibre until there stands the old monarch, actually living on sunshine! But the little daisy at its feet, modest and delicate, is equally consolidated sunshine.... Some have but feebly drawn on the Spiritual Light out of which strong lives are builded, others have raised the unveiled face to the supreme Light and have translated it into a life of spiritual beauty and moral fibre.⁷⁵

⁷² Jones, *Faith and Practice*, 50.

⁷³ Jones, *Practical Christianity*, 11.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 257.

⁷⁵ Jones, *Double Search*, 51–52.

The analogy is both confident and exuberant, and serves to show that Jones saw the Divine–human relationship and the transformation it entailed as organic and natural: It is not merely a doctrine found in the Bible but reflects the way the natural world works. As Drummond might have said, it is natural law in the spiritual world.

To summarize this section, then, we can say that Jones' Christology is at times ambiguous. In all three books considered he is clear that Christ is the supreme reflection of God's character, that Christ draws people to God, and that the incarnation is an inevitable occurrence in a universe with a personal God at its centre. In other areas he is less consistent, especially in relation to terminology and psychology. In *Practical Christianity*, Jones refers to the Bible or makes doctrinal-sounding assertions that Christ is eternal and is in union with an individual Christian. In *Social Law*, aspects of Christology are shown to be consistent with psychology. Specifically, the incarnation is compared with the psychologically informed insight that (in Jones' view) all humans are conjunct with God, and the atonement is consistent with psychological insights into the influence of ideals. Thus, Christ is no different ontologically from humans, and it is not so much union with Christ that a Christian experiences as inner strength and inspiration. In *Double Search*, it is psychology that is authoritative. Christ is part of the evolutionary process, which is guided by God. Furthermore, the emphasis is on God dwelling within and there are calls for a psychologically informed theory of the atonement.

This ambiguity in Jones' Christology and the divergence from the core of conviction can be related to three of the five factors identified earlier. First, the ambiguity in many aspects of his Christology is partly a result of his *informal style*, in that he uses theological language loosely and on occasion seems to want to express his views in a way that appeals to his audience. Second, the divergence from the core of conviction apparent in the fact that Christ is ontologically the same as humans rather than the second person of the Trinity is a result of Jones' *reliance on*

psychology. Third, his failure to address this issue arises from his deliberate *theological naivety*. For example, although I have argued that Jones saw Christ as necessary in practice, critics certainly have a good basis for disagreeing, and Jones does not address this issue head on. This ambiguous, non-Trinitarian Christology diverges from both the core of conviction and evangelical Quakerism.

In view of the above comments, it is useful to pause at this point to draw some of the themes together from this and the previous two chapters in order to determine how Jones understood Christianity.

6.2 Interim summary for Chapters 3 to 5: Jones' understanding of Christianity

The main findings of the thesis so far can be summarized as follows.

- (1) Jones wrote *Social Law* because he was convinced that Christianity had to be made consistent with 'modern thought', a conviction that was in line with the liberal Quaker view that had emerged at the Manchester Conference of 1895.
- (2) His understanding of Christianity was shaped by Quakerism, so although he self-identified as a Christian, there were aspects of his faith that were not in accordance with the core of conviction.
- (3) His appropriation of 'modern thought' focused on the idealism of Josiah Royce, under whom he studied at Harvard in 1900/01, and the psychology of William James, with whom he corresponded. Neither Royce nor James held views that matched the core of conviction. In particular, there is a fundamental difference between the loving Father of Christianity and both the ultimate consciousness of Royce and the 'more' of James. Jones seems to assume that they are the same, in the sense that he neither flags nor addresses these differences, but the differences mean that his theism is in fact *multivalent*.

(4) Furthermore, Jones' *reliance on psychology* led him to propose that the subconscious housed the 'shekinah of the soul'. This view universalizes a relationship with God because this relationship is part of what it means to be human. It also means that Christ is neither ontologically unique nor the second person of the Trinity because the relationship between Christ and God is cast in the same terms as the relationship between humans and God.

(5) An analysis of Jones' attempted synthesis between Christianity and modern thought is complicated by two factors. The first is his *informal style*, which means that he uses theological terminology loosely and can easily be quoted out of context. The second is his deliberate *theological naivety*, which means that he does not compare his views directly with traditional Christian doctrine.

(6) Liberal/modernist Quakers, including prominent ones such as John Wilhelm Rowntree and Edward Grubb, endorsed Jones' views. For them, it made Quakerism intellectually credible. Letters from evangelical Quaker critics accused him of diverging from biblical teaching about sin, salvation and the role of Christ, and from the Quaker tradition. Furthermore, Jones' *multivalent theism* and *reliance on psychology* meant that his Quakerism was potentially pluralistic.

This question of the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity is complex, as noted in Chapter 1. A snapshot of some of the issues involved at about the time of *Social Law* can be gleaned from H. G. Wood's 1920 Swarthmore lecture, *Quakerism and the Church*. First, as noted, Quakers have since their inception been challenged regarding their understanding of the Inner Light and its relation to Christ. Indeed, Wood saw these challenges as legitimate, complaining that Fox's principle did not do justice to the historic revelation in Jesus Christ.⁷⁶ Second, Christianity was itself changing at the time of *Social Law*, and many of the criticisms made by evangelical Quakers of Jones could equally well be made of Christian liberal theology generally.

⁷⁶ Wood, *Quakerism and the Church*, 78.

To quote Wood again, 'Darwin, by forcing the recognition of the non-scientific, non-historical character of the Biblical account of creation, challenged the popular Evangelical conception of the authority of the Scriptures.'⁷⁷ This, he says, dealt a fatal blow to Calvinism. Third, Christianity encompasses a broad range of theological positions, so it is inevitably the case that Quakers would diverge from some expressions of Christianity while finding an affinity with others. This is again apparent in Wood, as he criticized the Roman Catholic church but proposed that 'Friends generally would do well to take more interest in other churches, especially in the Free Churches, than they usually do.'⁷⁸

With these complexities in mind, I make a few brief comments on Jones' thought in relation to Calvinism, Trinitarianism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Some of the issues mentioned will be picked up in more detail in later chapters.

Calvinism: Jones frequently distanced himself from what he termed 'Calvinistic' interpretations of Christianity, although he never defines what he means by this nor identifies which particular brand of Calvinism he had in mind. Regarding the Quaker insistence that there is something of God in every human life, for example, he asserts in *Social Law* that 'as against Calvinism, the Quaker was assuredly right'.⁷⁹ In fact, he saw Quakerism as the polar opposite to Calvinism, claiming that Fox 'met the Calvinistic theory of a congenital seed of sin in the new-born child by the counter claim that *there is a seed of God in every soul*',⁸⁰ and more generally that 'Quakerism, in its historical significance, can be rightly understood only as a profound revolt against the Calvinistic interpretation of man.'⁸¹ It is Jones' view that all humans are inherently related to God that necessitates this radical difference from Calvinism.

⁷⁷ Wood, *Quakerism and the Church*, 26.

⁷⁸ Wood, *Quakerism and the Church*, 18.

⁷⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 173.

⁸⁰ Jones, *Faith and Practice*, 28

⁸¹ Walters (ed.), *Essential Writings*, 71–72 (Extract from *Religious Foundations*).

As noted above, though, Calvinism was in decline anyway at the time of *Social Law*. One disadvantage of the fact that Jones habitually defined his position in opposition to Calvinism is that he never enters into dialogue with other forms of Christianity, for example those that emphasize that humans are created in the image of God and those that place a high premium on a felt relationship with God. Had he done so, he might have forged a stronger relationship between Quakerism and Christianity.

Trinitarianism: Jones never really sets out his position on Trinitarianism explicitly. As noted above, and also by Aiken, he does not identify Christ with the second person of the Trinity.⁸² Mention of the Holy Spirit in *Social Law* is almost exclusively restricted to the final, biblically oriented chapter. Here Jones interprets Paul's conception of the Holy Spirit as 'the self-communication of God, manifested in persons and producing a Divine-human life'.⁸³ He is thus focusing on an aspect of the Holy Spirit that resonates with his view of the relationship between God and humans, and there is little sense that the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Nor is the Holy Spirit explicitly associated with the Inner Light here, although, as will be discussed in the next chapter, they are related concepts.

Jones' reluctance to embrace or develop a Trinitarian theology was in line with the general Quaker modernist position: as Frost says in his article on modernist Quakers, it was difficult to ascertain their views on the Trinity because they judged all conceptions of the divine to be flawed.⁸⁴ In fact, this attitude goes back to the very beginnings of Quakerism. Fox viewed the concept of the Trinity as a 'notion', and when William Penn questioned the doctrine in his treatise *The Sandy Foundations Shaken*, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London.⁸⁵ Neither Fox nor

⁸² Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?', 46.

⁸³ Jones, *Social Law*, 261.

⁸⁴ Frost, J. W. 'Modernist and liberal Quakers, 1887–2010', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 81.

⁸⁵ For Fox and the Trinity, see S.W. Angell, 'God, Christ, and the Light', 160. For Penn and the Trinity, see W.A. Cooper, *A Living Faith* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1990), 34.

Penn, then, did much to encourage the development of a Quaker Trinitarian theology.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity: The relationship between Quakerism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity is beyond the scope of this thesis,⁸⁶ but there are some intriguing and under-researched resonances between Jones' thought and the recent work of Christopher Knight, for example. These arise in part from Jones' and Knight's reliance on Clement of Alexandria. Thus, for example, Jones' similarity to Clement regarding the incarnation (as discussed above) is coherent with Knight's panentheism, one implication of which is that the incarnation is not the sudden arrival of an otherwise absent Logos but the outworking of God's purpose begun in creation.⁸⁷ Or we could compare Knight's acceptance of the philosophy of emergence, which means that God 'designed' the universe with the particular aim that there should arise within it, through naturalistic processes, beings who can come to know God, with Jones' belief that a God who is at the heart of the Universe will inevitably be revealed through beings that develop consciousness.⁸⁸

In summary, the last three chapters have looked at Jones' view of three key theological concepts within Christianity: God, human nature and Christ. In brief, Jones believed in a personal, loving God in relationship with humans through the subconscious and revealed supremely in Christ. His understanding was not Trinitarian, was opposed to Calvinism, but has points of contact with aspects of modern-day Eastern Orthodox theology as expressed by Knight. His ideas were biblically informed, but took experience, idealism and psychology as authoritative. The second half of the thesis shifts the focus to look at Jones' distinctively Quaker

⁸⁶ Some work has been done on the similarities of the views of early Quakers to *theosis*; see Spencer, *Holiness*, 51–52 and 255–258.

⁸⁷ Knight, C.C. *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 32.

⁸⁸ Knight, *God of Nature*, 9.

contribution by focusing on the relationship between humans and God in terms of the central Quaker concept of the Inner Light.

Chapter 7

The Inner Light is both human and divine

Instead of regarding the Inner Light as something foreign, it should rather be thought of as the Divine Life personally apprehended in an individual soul.¹

What catapulted Jones' belief that humans are related to God through consciousness to the heart of Quakerism was that he expressed this belief in terms of a key Quaker concept: the Inner Light. As Jones put it, the Inner Light is 'the key to every peculiarity in Quakerism',² and it is this concept more than any other that provides the primary point of contact between the synthesis of idealism, psychology and Christianity seen in the previous three chapters and Quakerism. The Inner Light is central to *Social Law* – as noted in Chapter 1, Jones' letter to Rowntree refers to the pages dealing with the Inner Light as the cardinal ones.

Intriguingly, even though the Inner Light is such a defining concept, there has been throughout Quaker history little consensus on what it actually is and what it actually does. Broadly speaking, it expresses the idea that there is 'something of God' in every human soul.³ The aspect of the Inner Light that Jones took issue with and that is the subject of this chapter was the traditional view (as he saw it) that the concept was dualistic. The significance he attached to the issue is clear in a letter he wrote

¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 176.

² Jones, *Social Law*, 167.

³ Jones, *Social Law*, 168.

to Norman Penney: 'The question of whether the Light belongs to man's own nature and being or whether it is something from beyond himself is, of course, one of the most important of all the problems.'⁴ Jones saw the formulation of the Inner Light in binary terms: either it was a supernatural faculty (as he put it, 'foreign' to human nature), or it was an inherent part of human nature (i.e. belonging to man as man).⁵

The traditional view of the Inner Light had been formulated in the 17th century by the Quaker theologian Robert Barclay. Jones seems to have adopted this view up to a few years prior to *Social Law*. In his first book (1889), he drew attention to the 'immense' difference between the Quaker conviction that there is nothing in human nature that can lead to salvation and the Transcendentalist view that the 'God-given teacher' is a '*natural* endowment of the human mind', and there is no suggestion that he wishes to diverge from the traditional formulation.⁶ By the time of *Social Law*, though, Jones had unequivocally rejected this understanding, claiming that Barclay's dualistic formulation was based on 'woefully imperfect psychology' and insisting that the Inner Light was an integral part of human nature.⁷ Not surprisingly, Jones' radical new formulation initially met with some opposition. The evangelical Quaker William Pinkham, for example, spoke for many when he insisted that God did not dwell in souls that were in hell, were unrepentant or had no faith in Christ.⁸ Jones' view gradually gained ground among Liberal Quakers, however, and certainly by the 1950s his was the leading name in the predominant tendency in Quaker theology regarding the Inner Light.⁹ Jones, then, instigated an important shift in this quintessentially Quaker concept.

⁴ To Norman Penney, 11 November 1930, HC Box 56.

⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 174.

⁶ Jones, *Eli and Sybil Jones*, 301 (italics as in original).

⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 174 (footnote, revised version).

⁸ Angell, 'God, Christ, and the Light', 168.

⁹ L. Eeg-Olofsson, *The Conception of the Inner Light in Robert Barclay's Theology: A Study in Quakerism* (Studia Theologica Lundensia, 5) (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954), 18.

The Inner Light is important partly because it is more than an abstract theological concept. Rather, it was seen as having implications for behaviour and spiritual practices.¹⁰ Regarding behaviour, for example, Jones complained that Quietist Quakers, who viewed the Inner Light as something foreign to human nature, were prone to passivity because they waited for divine inspiration rather than engaging in a 'strenuous preparation of life',¹¹ and Joel Bean claimed that evangelical Quakers were experiencing moral decline because they had turned away from the Inner Light.¹² The practical implications of Jones' formulation were certainly recognized in 1907 by the liberal English Quaker George Newman, whose editorial in the *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* argued that Jones' treatment of the Inner Light reminded Quakers that the inward life could be revealed only in service to others.¹³ Furthermore, Quaker scholar Jackie Scully notes that for modernist Quakers the phrase 'that of God in everyone' (and therefore also, I suggest, the phrase the Inner Light) came to be seen as a non-negotiable claim to the value of human personhood, which has ethical implications regarding how people should be treated.¹⁴ Regarding spiritual practices, Bible reading is necessarily approached differently depending on whether one sees the Inner Light as authoritative over the Bible or as an aid to reading it.¹⁵

In spite of Jones' influence regarding the Quaker understanding of the Inner Light, there has been little analysis of how credible his views are. Jones contended that his position was supported by philosophy, psychology, experience and Scripture, so in this chapter I assess the strength of his arguments and consider whether the

¹⁰ Scully argues that although early Quakers grounded allowed 'inward revelation' to guide their decisions, they also relied on Scripture, for example citing the Golden Rule. The 20th century liberal/modernist Quakers, however, aimed to respond to God within others with love. See J. L. Scully, 'Quakers and ethics', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 536 and 546.

¹¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 175.

¹² Joel Bean, 28 September 1893, HC Box 1.

¹³ G. Newman, 'The Divine Immanence and Quakerism', *Friend's Quarterly Examiner* April (1907): 155.

¹⁴ Scully, 'Quakers and ethics', 546.

¹⁵ See Macy, 'Quakers and Scripture'.

evidence he provides supports his view that the Inner Light is part of human nature (I term this the 'inherent' view) or is in fact consistent with the Inner Light being something Divine implanted in humans, as per Barclay (I term this the 'dualistic' view). My conclusion is that Jones' arguments are too superficial to be convincing. These findings are potentially significant for Quakerism's self-understanding. If Jones' arguments are indeed weak, then it would seem to be important to at least acknowledge that today's views may be resting on shaky intellectual foundations.

I start by providing a brief history of interpretations of the Inner Light in order to illustrate both the importance of the concept and its implications for faith and practice. I then discuss Jones' formulation of the Inner Light, examining the strength of the evidence he provides to support it in *Social Law*. The final section discusses the development of his thought post-*Social Law*.

As a preliminary remark, it is worth noting that Dandelion and Angell see an important difference between the terms Inner Light and Inward Light.¹⁶ According to them, early Friends used the term 'the Light within' or 'Inward Light', with the term 'Inner Light' coming into use in the late 19th century. Furthermore, they point out that some see this shift as marking a change in emphasis from a transcendent God from whom Light comes inwardly to an immanent God, a source of Light within. Interestingly, though, Jones, who was largely responsible for the latter interpretation and terminology, seems not to have recognized this distinction. In the letter to Norman Penney referred to above he wrote that 'In reference to the terms, "Inner Light" and "Inward Light" I find throughout Christian history that the terms are used interchangeably and have been ever since 1530. They are also used more or less interchangeably by the early Friends themselves and by Friends of later periods. I doubt very much whether it is wise to make a careful discrimination

¹⁶ P. Dandelion & S.W. Angell, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 7.

between the two terms.¹⁷ I do not adjudicate on this issue here, because the terminology in and of itself is not directly relevant to the focus of this chapter. I have opted to use the term Inner Light as this is the term favoured by Jones.

7.1 Brief overview of the history of the Inner Light

The distinctive emphasis of early Quakers was the divine Light of Christ, which was held to be universally present in all humanity. As the liberal Quaker Edward Grubb put it in his 1914 Swarthmore lecture, ‘this [light], which they felt within them, was no prerogative of a favoured few, but was, as the Fourth Evangelist declared, a “Light that lighteth every man”.’¹⁸ This view was widely criticized by the Puritans of the time. John Bunyan, for example, asserted that Quakers denied the historical Christ by saying that he was only God manifested in their flesh.¹⁹ Quakers refuted such criticisms biblically: Margaret Fell, for example, quoted Jn 8:12 and Jn 12:35–36 to associate the biblical image of light with Christ in a letter to Puritan opponent James Cave.²⁰ The common Quaker view that individuals did not have equal access to the light but needed to be faithful to the ‘measure’ they had was also given biblical authentication, specifically 2 Cor 10:12 (‘When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise’) and Eph 4:7 (‘But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it’).²¹ In addition to the Bible, personal experience was an important strand in the formulation of the concept. When a Presbyterian in North Carolina objected to Fox’s conviction that the Light was available to all irrespective of whether they had heard of Christ, Fox summoned an American Indian and asked if he was aware of

¹⁷ To Norman Penney, 11 November 1930, HC Box 56. Note that the reference to 1530 is relevant to Jones’ views on Quakerism (founded by George Fox in the 1650s) to originating in continental mysticism.

¹⁸ Grubb, *Historic and the Inward Christ*, 26.

¹⁹ Grubb, *Historic and the Inward Christ*, 28

²⁰ Angell, ‘God, Christ and the Light’, 159.

²¹ Angell, ‘God, Christ and the Light’, 160.

‘something in him’ that told him when he did wrong. When the Indian agreed that there was, Fox took this as demonstrating the universality of the saving light of Christ.²²

The challenge of trying to formalise the doctrine of the Inner Light in the face of criticisms during this early period was taken up by Robert Barclay, an aristocratic Protestant Scot who had distinguished himself academically at the Roman Catholic Scots College in Paris. He became a Quaker on his return to Scotland in 1667, after attending Meetings where he famously ‘found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up’.²³ Barclay produced the first, and arguably only, systematic Quaker theology: *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, published in Latin in 1676 and in English in 1678. The *Apology* rejects predestination (against Presbyterians) and the imputation of sin to infants (against Catholics) but maintains a pessimistic view of human nature.²⁴

Jones rather sweepingly asserted that Barclay viewed the light as originating in God but implanted in humans as a ‘divine seed’, and thus as being ‘foreign’ (Jones’ term) to humans.²⁵ Eeg-Oloffson, however, gives a more subtle interpretation, arguing that although Barclay taught that humans had a divine principle working within them, which ‘was no part of his soul and body, and yet constitutive of his being a man’, he nevertheless saw this as a vestige of what Adam had before the fall.²⁶ This *spiraculum vitarum* (breath of life), though, does not enable humans to do good or be convicted of evil unless it is visited afresh from God. Eeg-Olofsson concludes that Barclay’s dualism is not complete, and that Quaker criticism of him on this point is

²² Angell, ‘God, Christ and the Light’, 161.

²³ Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 122.

²⁴ Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 123 and 125.

²⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 174.

²⁶ Eeg-Oloffson, *Inner Light in Robert Barclay’s Theology*, 72.

unjustified.²⁷ As we will see, Jones' arguably over-simplistic treatment of Barclay means that some of his objections to Barclay's view are unjustified.

As the 17th century gave way to the 18th, Quakerism entered what is known as its Quietist period. Jones saw it as sanctioned by Barclay, who advocated that the Light Within required the suppression of all 'creaturely activity', and as inspired by continental Quietists such as Madame Guyon and Francois de Sales.²⁸ Quietism is characterized by the suspension of human reason, planning and activity in favour of passive receptivity of divine revelation.²⁹ In line with this, authority is given to the Light, and human reason is, to varying degrees, viewed with suspicion.³⁰ The authority given to the Light inevitably had an impact on the authority given to Scripture, first in that Quietists tended to rely on Spirit-directed, internal understandings, and second in that the importance of the Bible diminished because the direct inward teaching of Christ was held to be both superior and sufficient.³¹

The 19th century saw two major divisions within Quakerism, both triggered by evangelicalism. Although Quakers were initially wary of this movement, realizing that to adopt it would involve a radical change concerning the primacy of the Inner Light, between 1775 and 1825 Quaker thought was undoubtedly influenced by evangelical doctrine.³² There was also, however, a counter-current that sought to reaffirm the Inner Light 'as the sole and sufficient basis of religion'.³³ These opposing currents caused the first split within Quakerism, the 'Great Separation' of

²⁷ Eeg-Olofsson, *Inner Light in Robert Barclay's Theology*, 73.

²⁸ R. Rogers Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism, 1692–c.1805' in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 49–50. Punshon agrees with Jones's assessment of Barclay, claiming that he put Quakerism into 'a quietist kind of straitjacket by his philosophical dualism and distrust of the powers of the human mind' (Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 125). Note, however, that differences between Quaker and continental Quietism mean that others disagree with Jones' assessment (Rogers Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism', 50)

²⁹ Rogers Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism', 49.

³⁰ A complete mistrust of reason was mitigated to some extent by Enlightenment views (see Rogers Healey, 'Quietist Quakerism', 51).

³¹ Macy, 'Quakers and Scripture', 192.

³² Jones, *Later Periods*, Vol. 1, 275.

³³ Jones, *Later Periods*, Vol. 1, 275.

1827. The dispute coalesced around the views of Elias Hicks (1748–1830), an elderly farmer, self-taught theologian and travelling minister from Long Island, New York, who, according to Jones, was ‘a profoundly mystical type of person, able to sit for long periods in “a perfect sweet calm”’.³⁴ Followers of Hicks became known as Hicksites, and in later years they readily embraced liberal theology. Their opponents were known as Orthodox Quakers. Although there were certainly sociological factors at play in the resulting schism (Hicksites tended to be rural, and Orthodox Quakers to be urban), the main point of contention was fundamentally that Hicks attributed primary authority to the Light whereas Orthodox Quakers attributed it to Scripture.

Divisions subsequently occurred within the Orthodox Quakers, again partly in response to the influence of evangelicalism and in particular that of Joseph John Gurney (the English banker, whom we met in Chapter 1, whose visit to America was so successful). Gurney emphasized the importance of Scripture rather than the Light and, in fact, tended to refer to the Holy Spirit rather than the Light. In a criticism reminiscent of that posed by earlier Puritans, he complained that identifying Christ with the influence he bestows (i.e. light) would deprive the Saviour of his personal attributes and reduce him to a principle.³⁵ Unsurprisingly, some Orthodox Quakers had serious reservations about Gurney because they worried about his marginalization of the Light. Opposition was led by New England schoolteacher John Wilbur (1774–1856), who, in contrast to the personable Gurney, had a reputation for being rather glum – Jones describes him as uncompromising and ‘very annoying’.³⁶ Wilbur argued that if the true light signified nothing more than Christ incarnate, then ‘Quakerism would be no more’.³⁷ He also insisted that the Bible should be read with reverence and awe rather than being analysed with the

³⁴ Jones, *Later Periods*, Vol. 1, 442.

³⁵ Angell, ‘God, Christ and the Light’, 165.

³⁶ Jones, *Later Periods*, Vol. 1, 521.

³⁷ Angell, ‘God, Christ and the Light’, 166.

intellect. The first Wilburite separation occurred in New England Yearly Meeting in 1845,³⁸ with Wilburite Quakerism being strongest in Philadelphia and Ohio. One visible aspect of the separation was that Wilbur feared that contact with the world would distract individuals from pursuing holiness, so Wilburites maintained a Quaker 'hedge' of plain dress and speech.³⁹ Jones knew many Wilburite Quakers in Philadelphia and described them as 'wide-awake, well-educated, prosperous and broad-minded'.⁴⁰ Many of them were at Haverford and, he said, contributed to the atmosphere of liberal and progressive thought.

In the late 1800s, then, American Quakerism comprised Hicksites, Gurneyites and Wilburites, with some of the main reasons behind the splits attributable to the role of the Inner Light. Gurneyites were closest to evangelical Christianity and tended to refer to the Holy Spirit rather than the Light. Hicksites and Wilburites emphasized the centrality and authority of the Inner Light. Both of these groups tended to be theologically liberal, but because Wilburites conserved the traditional Quaker traits of plainness they are, rather confusingly, often referred to as Conservative Quakers. A summary of the Quaker schisms in relation to the Inner Light is given in Appendix A.

At this point, idealism, liberal theology and psychology were making their presence felt, necessitating further modifications in the formulation of the Inner Light. Spencer notes that discussion often centred on the views of Barclay, with Liberal Quakers generally dismissive of his work as a meaningful expression of Quakerism but evangelical Quakers appreciating its Christian orthodoxy.⁴¹ Jones was a leading figure in the debate and in *Social Law* does indeed, as we will now see, expound his interpretation of the Inner Light using Barclay's views as a foil.

³⁸ Wilson, 'Conservative Friends', 127.

³⁹ Dandelion, *A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 2; Vining, *Friend of Life*, 63–63.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Middle Years*, 24.

⁴¹ C.D. Spencer, 'Quakers in Theological Context', in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds S. W. Angell & P. Dandelion (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 144.

7.2 The Inner Light according to Jones

Jones argues that the early Quakers felt the truth of God's presence within profoundly but failed to express it clearly because Barclay was writing within a framework of Cartesian dualism. At the end of his chapter on the Inner Light in *Social Law*, he summarizes his own view: 'Instead of regarding the Inner Light as something foreign, it should rather be thought of as the Divine Life personally apprehended in an individual soul. It is both human and Divine. It is the actual inner self formed by the union of a Divine *and* a human element in a single, undivided life.'⁴² The insistence that the Inner Light is not 'foreign' is a refutation of Barclay's view. However, the difficulty of expressing an alternative view clearly is perhaps apparent in that Jones refers to 'Divine' and 'human' elements, which has at least a flavour of dualism about it. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 1, it seems likely that Jones rewrote this phrase following criticism from Haines, suggesting that he was struggling to express what he meant.

Jones structures his discussion according to the three ways that he understood early Quakers to have used the term Inner Light (or its synonyms 'seed', 'Light of Christ', 'that of God in everyone'): (i) as a Divine Life resident in the soul; (ii) as a source of guidance and illumination; and (iii) as a ground of spiritual certitude.⁴³ I suggest that the first point, that the divine life is resident in the soul, is theoretical, in that it involves philosophical, theological and psychological issues. The second is practical, concerning how the Inner Light influences the decision-making process. The third is related to authority: it means that spiritual authority resides 'in the individual's own heart and not somewhere outside him' (i.e. within rather than in the Bible, Christ or the Church).⁴⁴ In this section I discuss the first and third of these aspects of the

⁴² Jones, *Social Law*, 176.

⁴³ Jones, *Social Law*, 171.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 169.

Inner Light. The second is deferred until Chapter 8 on Mysticism, as it is related to Jones' conviction that experience of God (i.e. mysticism) should result in action.

7.2.1 The Inner Light as a 'Divine Life' in the soul

Jones asserts that the Quaker position that there is something of God in every human life is 'assuredly right',⁴⁵ and that there is 'theological' and 'psychological' evidence to support this claim. I consider both types of evidence below and assess whether they support an inherent or a dualistic view of the Inner Light.

7.2.1.1 Theological evidence

Jones claims that the 'theological' evidence for his inherent view can be found in 'Scripture teaching' and in the writing of the 'Fathers'.⁴⁶ He does not provide any details of this broad assertion, but it is possible to infer what he might have had in mind from elsewhere: from the final chapter in *Social Law* for the former and from his wider corpus for the latter.

The final chapter is concerned not with the Inner Light *per se* but with the closely related idea that God and humans are united. This material was based on his dissertation at Harvard in 1900/01, and likely formed the core of a book 'Study in New Testament Mysticism', which was rejected by the publishers Mifflin Houghton in 1902 on the grounds that there would be insufficient interest.⁴⁷ The title of the rejected book gives an indication of Jones' orientation towards New Testament material: we might expect an emphasis on 'mystical' union with God, rather than on the need for atonement, for example. The chapter in *Social Law* discusses the human–divine relationship according to Paul, the Synoptics and John, as detailed below.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 173.

⁴⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 173.

⁴⁷ Mifflin Houghton, 10 July 1902, HC Box 5.

Pauline material. Jones interprets Paul as saying that God dwells within, but he does not consider counter-arguments. For example, he quotes the prayer in Ephesians that ‘Christ may dwell in your hearts’.⁴⁸ But (at the risk of being overly pedantic) he does not consider that the very fact that this prayer is necessary presupposes that it is possible to have a heart wherein Christ does not dwell, a state of affairs that would argue against a universal indwelling. He also asserts that the divine–human relationship permeated Paul’s entire conception of salvation, and that this was born in Paul’s own personal experience.⁴⁹ This appeal to Paul’s experience needs more careful consideration though, because the pre-Damascus Paul persecuted Christians. In other words, Jones takes Paul’s post-conversion experience as normative and does not address how an individual in whom God dwelt could persecute Christians.

Synoptic material. The synoptic passage Jones refers to is Matt 25:40: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done anything unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye have done it unto *me*’.⁵⁰ The passage is *consistent* with a theory of divine indwelling (i.e. with an interpretation that sees charitable acts as directed at God because God is actually within the hungry, thirsty, needy). But it is not *required* by it. The passage could be understood in the sense that a service to anyone suffering and loved by God is a service to God. Jones also remarks in passing that in the synoptics ‘the kingdom of God is proclaimed as within’.⁵¹ It is curious that he does not make more of this, as it would seem to support his position.

John’s Gospel. Jones notes that John uses the expressions ‘Abide in God’ and ‘God dwells in you’ (from the ‘Vine passage’ in Jn 15:1-10) to describe ‘a vital Divine–human relationship’.⁵² He does not, however, consider verses that oppose this

⁴⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 256.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 257.

⁵⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 264.

⁵¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 264.

⁵² Jones, *Social Law*, 269–270.

view. One could point, for example, to the need to be born again (Jn 3:5) or to receive the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22), which could be interpreted in the sense of an individual and their relationship to God needing to change in a profound way. Furthermore, in his discussion of the union of the soul with God in *Testimony of a Soul* (1936) Jones writes that ‘This depth-view of the soul lies at the very heart of Johannine Christianity, though it is thought of there as an imparted gift of grace rather than as a native capacity.’⁵³ Whether this union is a ‘gift of grace’ or a ‘native capacity’ is the key question under discussion in *Social Law*, however, so either Jones had not recognized this in 1904, or he had come up with an explanation that satisfied him that he does not elaborate on, or he chose to ignore it.

In summary, Jones’ biblical arguments for God and humans being united, and therefore for an ‘inherent’ view of the Inner Light, are too superficial to be effective. He is selective in his choice of passages, fails to consider alternative explanations for those that he does, and fails to recognize and address inconsistencies. Part of the problem is undoubtedly down to the fact that, because of his *informal style*, he is cramming a complex problem of biblical interpretation into a few pages, so he cannot hope to do it justice. In essence he adopted a ‘proof text’ approach – quoting verses that fitted his interpretation, ignoring others, and not engaging in detailed exegesis. He was certainly aware that the Bible supported dualistic interpretations, at one point asking ‘Did [Paul] hold to a rigid dualism of body and spirit? If he did, he forgot it here’, but he does not address this complexity.⁵⁴ Being charitable, it seems that his priority was to show that his view of the human–divine relationship was supported by the Bible (or at least by an important strand of it), rather than to argue for it rigorously.

The Fathers: Jones provides no details in *Social Law* of what he refers to as ‘the writings of the “Fathers”’ that allegedly support his interpretation of the Inner Light.

⁵³ Jones, *Testimony*, 168.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 262.

Because there is a close link between the Inner Light and mysticism (see Chapter 8), however, it is possible to infer the direction his argument might have taken, had he spelled it out. In *Studies in Mystical Religion*, Jones devotes a chapter to 'Mysticism in the Church Fathers', making the case that although the Church Fathers were not 'mystics' but rather statesmen and philosophers, there are scattered passages in the writings of almost all of them that express a direct and inward religious experience that can be called mystical.⁵⁵

Particular emphasis is given to Augustine, whom Jones calls the 'real father of Catholic mysticism'.⁵⁶ Any appeal to Augustine as endorsing Jones' view of the Inner Light, however, needs to deal with the fact that Augustine emphasized the distance between humans and God, to the extent that some have argued that he should not be classed as a mystic at all.⁵⁷ Jones does not go into detail but suggests that Augustine's mystical experience of God can be separated from his theology: 'Through the hard crust of cooled theology the warm religious life ever and anon breaks out.'⁵⁸ In other words, he seems to be suggesting that Augustine taught one thing but experienced another, and that it is the experience that is authoritative. One can see why Jones, as a Quaker who emphasizes experience but dislikes 'notions', might well adopt this strategy, but he leaves himself open the criticism that he is misinterpreting Augustine. It would in fact be more natural to interpret Augustine as supporting Barclay's dualistic view, such that God is experienced and found within but is not part of human nature.

It is also possible that Jones is thinking of Clement of Alexandria, who as noted in previous chapters was one of Jones' 'spiritual heroes' and stressed the immanence of God, teaching that humans and God were in 'mutual and reciprocal

⁵⁵ R. M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 80.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 87.

⁵⁷ M. Lane, 'St Augustine of Hippo', in *Journey to the Heart*, ed. K. Nataraja (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2011), 135–147.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 97.

correspondence'. As discussed in Chapter 2, though, Clement maintained a distinction between humans and God. It is by no means certain, then, that the Fathers supported Jones' inherent view.

7.2.1.2 Psychological evidence

Jones asks and answers a question of the early Quaker view that there is something of God in every human life: 'But does psychology give any ground for such a view? Is the doctrine founded in the nature of things? Both yes and no.'⁵⁹ Jones' 'yes' refers to the fact that God is indeed experienced within; the 'no' refers to Barclay's formulation.

Jones' first argument is based on Pascal's insistence that 'Thou wouldst not seek God if thou hadst not found Him.'⁶⁰ He continues with the assertion that 'Every analysis of personality discovers the fact that God and man are inherently bound up together. Personal consciousness looms up out of an infinite background.'⁶¹ In other words, he is suggesting that the fact that we search for God is consistent with recent discoveries that God is part of human nature through consciousness: it is, in fact, this knowledge of God that enables us to search for God. The logic of this connection is sound, in that it might be expected that God can be sought and recognized because he is in a sense familiar (cf. the Greek idea, noted in Chapter 2, that only like can know like). The problem is, however, that the evidence on the basis of an analysis of personality for the assertion that God and humans are 'inherently bound' is thin. As discussed in Chapters 4 to 6, this proposition does not explain sin, assumes that consciousness will never have a scientific explanation, and requires idealism as a philosophical framework. So overall, Jones' defence of his 'inherent' position using Pascal is not particularly convincing. Moreover, Pascal's statement is consistent with Barclay's view of the Inner Light as a 'foreign' seed

⁵⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 173.

⁶⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 173.

⁶¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 173.

inside humans: even if God is ‘foreign’, God is present, and therefore might be sought further if, say, the desire to search for God was one of the consequences of the presence of the ‘seed’. Jones’ use of Pascal, then, is inconclusive as regards support for an inherent rather than a dualistic view of the Inner Light.

Jones’ second argument is that Barclay’s view means that ‘there is no basis for a unifying personality which binds into one organic and *vital* whole the divine and the human, *making a new spiritual creation*’.⁶² This is perhaps not an accurate reflection of Barclay’s view though. Barclay says, ‘So we understand not men as simply having grace in them as a seed; which we indeed affirm all have in a measure; but we understand men that are gracious, leavened by it into the nature thereof, so as thereby to bring forth those good fruits of a blameless conversation, and of justice, holiness, patience, and temperance, which the apostle requires as necessary in a true Christian bishop and minister.’⁶³ Jones does not define what he means by a ‘new spiritual creation’, but one might reasonably assume that it would be manifested in the transformation or ‘leavening’ envisaged by Barclay. Jones’ objection that Barclay’s view does not allow for a unifying personality, then, is arguably unduly harsh.

In summary, Jones’ main objection to Barclay on psychological grounds is his objection to dualism – recall that Jones insists that in *Social Law* he was trying to avoid the ‘defeative dualism of a two-world theory’.⁶⁴ His first argument takes inspiration from Pascal’s statement that to seek God is to have found him, but Jones’ treatment of the Inner Light in relation to this ability to seek God is equally consistent with inherent and with dualistic formulations. His second argument, that Barclay’s view leaves individuals ‘unspiritualized’, is flawed because his representation of Barclay is over-simplistic: Barclay believed that transformation of

⁶² Jones, *Social Law*, 175, italics as in original.

⁶³ R. Barclay, *Barclay’s Apology for the True Christian Divinity as Professed by the People called Quakers*, 2nd edn, Abridged by George Harrison (London: Harvey and Darton, [1678] 1822), 162.

⁶⁴ As stated in Jones, ‘Why I enroll’, 211.

the individual was possible through the Inner Light (or seed, in Barclay's terminology) even though it was 'foreign' to human nature.

Thus neither Jones' theological arguments nor his philosophical/psychological ones provide a convincing defence of his view that the Inner Light is an inherent part of human nature. We now turn to his treatment of the Inner Light as a source of 'spiritual certitude', namely to his conviction that 'the ground of religion is in the individual's own heart and not somewhere outside him'.⁶⁵

7.2.2 The Inner Light as spiritual certitude

The belief of early Quakers that the Inner Light is 'a self-demonstration of spiritual experience' is, according to Jones, 'in harmony with the profoundest philosophical movement of the modern world'.⁶⁶ It 'has been settled for all time', he continues, 'that the criterion of truth is to be found in the nature of consciousness itself – not somewhere else'. Jones' point here seems to be that the fact that truth is found within means that the Inner Light is inherent.

Jones' claim is fairly sweeping, and he does not provide any details. He summarily dismisses the Church and Bible as criteria for truth, stating that spiritual truths are known 'because it is witnessed within, not because some man in sacred garb has announced it, or because I have read in a book that such an experience *might be mine*'.⁶⁷ Edward Grubb's 1908 work *Authority and the Light Within* (a book we will consider in more detail in Chapter 9), however, indicates the general liberal Quaker attitude. Briefly, Grubb argues that the Church is not authoritative because there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus that foreshadows it, and there is no clear evidence that Peter was Bishop of Rome.⁶⁸ The Bible is not authoritative because, in addition to requiring the authority of the Church to institute the canon, it assumes that

⁶⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 169.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 171.

⁶⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 172.

⁶⁸ Grubb, *Light Within*, 21.

God's truth was perfectly comprehended and infallibly transmitted and interpreted.⁶⁹ Christ is not authoritative because we do not know if we have an accurate recollection of his words. Note, however, that this view was not held throughout Quakerism: the evangelical Quaker William Pinkham, for example, wrote to Jones insisting that 'The Friends Church has held from its beginning that the Scriptures are the final outward authority in questions of faith and practice'.⁷⁰

The issue I address in more detail here, however, is that not everyone has 'spiritual certitude', namely a felt experience of God's presence or a conviction that a certain action is 'God's will'. This ability to experience God is a key component of Jones' thought and his formulation of the Inner Light, so it is important to see how he deals with this discrepancy between theory and practice. The complaint of the devout Quaker William Littleboy is a case in point.

Littleboy claimed not to have any experience of God and wrote to Jones with palpable anguish: 'I believe that you, to whom we look for a prophetic revelation would greatly extend the circle of your helpfulness if you recognised ... that there are probably hundreds of your readers who are filled with a sense of utter helplessness and hopelessness when they see this deep spiritual consciousness taken for granted as a necessary and basal fact of life.'⁷¹ Littleboy objected that he did not think it was necessary for a Christian to be able to experience the presence of God, first 'because God is absolutely reasonable, and it would be unreasonable to set up as a condition a state of soul which is absolutely beyond the power of the human will to attain', and secondly because he found 'nothing of this in the Synoptic teaching of Christ'.⁷²

⁶⁹ Grubb, *Light Within*, p.30.

⁷⁰ William Pinkham, 12 November 1904, HC Box 8.

⁷¹ William Littleboy, 13 March 1912, HC Box 12.

⁷² Littleboy went on to write a gentle and eloquent pamphlet, *The Appeal of Quakerism to the Non-Mystic* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1916, reprinted in 'Quaker Classics, 1964), arguing that 'It is a fundamental mistake to assume that mystical experience (first hand communion with, and revelation from, God) is equivalent to, or necessarily accompanied by, strong emotion or even clear

Jones' reliance on psychology means that everyone should be able to experience spiritual certitude because they are in contact with God through the subconscious. It is this that implicitly lies behind statements such as, 'the God who is the unquestioned object of reality for the greatest spiritual geniuses breaks, at least dimly, on the souls of the most ordinary of us'.⁷³ He does, however, seem to take Littleboy's objection on board at times in his wider corpus. In *Spiritual Reformers*, for example, he acknowledges that 'There are numerous persons who are as serious and earnest and passionate as the loftiest mystical saint, and who, in spite of all their listening for the inner flow of things, discover no inrushes, feel no invasions, are aware of no environing Companion...[Thus] To insist on mystical experience as the only path to religion would involve an "election" no less inscrutable and pitiless than that of the Calvinistic system – an "election" settled for each person by the peculiar psychic structure of his inner self.'⁷⁴

Jones does on occasion offer a number of explanations in passing of why this experience is not universal in practice, and it is notable that his explanations all occur in the wider literature on religious experience. For example, he uses what Caroline Davis terms a 'sense perception analogy'.⁷⁵ These types of explanation propose that not having the ability to have a religious experience is like having a deficiency or lack of training in a particular sense organ – someone might not have 'an ear for music', for example. In *Social Law*, Jones picks sight as the specific sense, claiming that those who have not had a mystic experience 'are no more justified in denying its reality than the blind man is in denying reality to the stars which he

consciousness of His nearness' (p.7). He encouraged his readers to persevere in following Jesus: 'In so doing your whole life will be illuminated, and though no ecstasy be yours, you shall have the peace that comes of the assurance that God is yours and you are His' (p.17).

⁷³ Jones, *New Studies*, 17.

⁷⁴ R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London: Macmillan, 1914), xxii.

⁷⁵ C. F. Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 1999), 69. I also refer to Davis' book in Chapters 8 and 10. I am not concerned with the main thesis of her book – that religious experience most effectively provides evidence for religious belief within a cumulative style of argument that uses evidence from a wide range of sources – but rather in finding a suitable set of categories and definitions with which to analyse Jones.

cannot see'.⁷⁶ Similarly, in *Middle Years* he suggests that if someone 'has no spiritual light and is not moved or stirred by celestial currents, it is not because God has failed to come, but because the spiritual eye has not yet opened'.⁷⁷

Furthermore, the reason for this 'blindness' (or deafness etc.) is often ascribed to 'sin' in the wider literature.⁷⁸ Jones also made this assertion, surmising that 'There is but one possible separation between [humans and God], namely sin, which, like a cataract destroys vision, not the light, and which, once removed, leaves the two spirits face to face.'⁷⁹ Given that it seems unlikely that Littleboy would be substantially more 'sinful' than Jones himself, though, this latter suggestion seems a fairly weak explanation in his particular case.

Another widely used explanation in the literature is the so-called 'moral analogy', which proposes that if someone has no perception of what 'ought' means, it is impossible to convey the meaning to them. Most people can however, so the theory goes, come to have discriminating moral experiences by learning from those who are particularly attuned to moral significance.⁸⁰ This is similar to what Jones says is happening in a Meeting for Worship. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, he believed that each individual became more attuned to the presence of God in a group situation in which all were deliberately seeking God. In other words, an individual who for some reason has only a weak perception of God's presence may find their capacity increased by being in the company of those who are more attuned to God: the capacity is innate but needs to be fostered. Again, though, this explanation could hardly be applied to a sincere Quaker such as Littleboy, who regularly attended Quaker meetings. In the round, then, Jones' conviction that spiritual certitude reflects an inherent view of the Inner Light suffers because he does not offer a convincing explanation of why some people do not experience this

⁷⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 145.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Middle Years*, 93.

⁷⁸ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 74.

⁷⁹ Walters, *Essential Writings*, 66 (extract from *A Dynamic Faith*).

⁸⁰ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 68.

certitude, which should be universal.⁸¹

In summary, Jones' aim was to show that the experience of spiritual certitude was consistent with the Inner Light being 'inherent' rather than 'dualistic'. He does this by summarily dismissing biblical and ecclesiastical authority and asserting that it has now been proved that authority resides in conscious experience. This seat of authority is consistent with the Inner Light being inherent because it sees God as related to humans through consciousness. The problem here is that this view implies that everyone should experience spiritual certitude, but many people do not. Jones does propose a number of reasons for this lack, but they are comments in passing rather than a carefully constructed defence of this weakness. Regarding the particular case of the sincere, committed Quaker William Littleboy, for example, explanations such as sin or the need for communal worship seem inadequate. I do, however, return to this issue from the perspective of what sort of experience might qualify as 'spiritual certitude' or 'mystical' in the next chapter.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, Jones' view gradually became axiomatic. It is therefore useful to look at the way Jones expressed his views on the Inner Light post-*Social Law*.

7.3 The Inner Light post-*Social Law*

The quest to provide a chronological overview of Jones' thought on the Inner Light is complicated by the fact that he often discusses the human–divine relationship

⁸¹ Jones could also be expected to encounter problems in explaining religious experiences that were in some sense 'false' or manufactured. The Quaker psychologist Edwin Starbuck, for example, concluded that revivalists used discernible methods (affirmation of statements without rational support, repetition, a reliance on the 'contagion of feeling') to encourage sudden conversion, which meant that neurologically speaking something other than conversion may be happening, namely a relaxed, uninhibited state that rendered the mind suggestible (Hay, 'Psychologists interpreting conversion', 62). We will see in Chapter 8 that Jones addressed the practicalities of this possibility in relation to group discernment.

without using the phrase the 'Inner Light' itself. Furthermore, this relationship is so central to his thought that a comprehensive analysis is impractical here owing to the sheer size of his corpus. Thus, below I have selected relevant passages from some of his books and articles with the aim of providing a series of snapshots of his understanding of the Inner Light, even if the term is not mentioned explicitly. I have also given a brief overview of the context of the books and articles considered, as Jones expressed himself differently depending on his intended audience and the ideas with which he was preoccupied at the time. The survey is by no means exhaustive, but it is sufficient to provide at least a suggestion of the constants and variables that emerge in relation to his discussions of the Inner Light over the course of over 50 books spanning nearly 50 years.

7.3.1 Selected quotations from Jones' corpus

A Dynamic Faith (1900): This work consists of some of Jones' summer school lectures and presents a history of Quakerism. He writes that the first fact of Christianity is that God is self-revealing and the second is that humans have the capacity to know God.⁸² The key point here is that both the revelation of God and the ability of humans to receive that revelation are essential: they are two sides of the same coin. As in *Social Law*, this knowledge of God is mediated through an individual's 'subliminal self'. Furthermore, when Jones wrote a preface to the French edition 41 years later, he maintained that the book still represented his religious outlook.⁸³ It is worthwhile to bear this assertion in mind when considering the extracts below, because this consistency of thought is not always obvious from the way he expresses himself.

Divine Presence in Human Life (1907): This article, published in *Friends Fellowship Papers*, sets out the problems with the early Quaker dualistic understanding of the Inner Light. There is, Jones complains, Divine visitation but not Divine Immanence,

⁸² For more details, see the discussion on *A Dynamic Faith* in Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 105.

⁸³ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 84

and the formulation promotes passivity and favours asceticism because there is a schism between the natural and the supernatural. Jones emphasizes that human nature has a divine component, stressing that man, 'by his inherent nature, is both Divine and human'.⁸⁴ He goes on to set out the practical implications of this for transformation: 'The truth is that our souls open inwardly into God's ... we can become corporate with Him by acts or response, or we can become more and more isolated by living unto self.'⁸⁵ To paraphrase, Jones seems to be saying that the Inner Light can increase in intensity through human effort, as we become more 'corporate' with God, and that the result of this effort is alignment with God's character and will.

Quakerism: A Religion of Life (1908): Jones' inaugural 1908 Swarthmore lecture claims that 'Men are asking for a religion which builds solidly on the veritable facts of *experience* ... They want to feel their own souls burn within them with a sense of His Presence *now*. They seek a consciousness of finite spirit meeting infinite Spirit, an inward testimony to the Great Companion of our souls.'⁸⁶ Here, then, Jones is emphasizing the role of personal experience, but the relationship between humans and God is perhaps not quite as integrated as it is in *Social Law*; that is, humans have finite spirits or souls, but not, perhaps, an inherently divine component (cf. the passage from 'The Divine Presence' above). This message would presumably have been acceptable to evangelical Quakers, so it is possible that Jones chose his words carefully at such an auspicious occasion to avoid controversy.

Stories of Hebrew Heroes (1911): This is a children's book of stories about biblical characters including Adam and Eve, Abraham, and Noah. Not surprisingly, there is no attempt to define the relationship of humans and God (i.e. the Inner Light) in abstract terms, but the experiential essence of this relationship is captured in how

⁸⁴ R. M. Jones, 'The divine presence in human life', *Friends Fellowship Papers*, April (1907): 22.

⁸⁵ Jones, 'The divine presence', 23.

⁸⁶ Jones, *Quakerism*, 24–25.

these characters are described as listening to God and being transformed. It seemed to Noah, for example, that sometimes 'he could hear a quiet voice speaking inside and telling him what to do, and when he heard it he would always do what it told him, and just because he did this, little by little he grew so that he could hear the quiet voice better and better'.⁸⁷ Paraphrasing this in terms of the Inner Light, it seems that obedience to the promptings of the Inner Light means that an individual is changed in the sense that they become more sensitive to future promptings.⁸⁸

The essential goodness of humans is captured in the story of Jacob and his battle with God (Gen 32). Jacob 'discovered that God was trying to pull the good self in him up out of the mean old self, the way you pull up a plant by the roots. Perhaps now the old bad self *would* drop off and a new and noble man would come out.'⁸⁹ The point to note here is that humans need God to help them discover and act on this inner goodness. Furthermore, Jones is recognizing that in practice there is a part of humans that is not 'good', although he does not explain how this can be the case.

The World Within (1918): Comprising essays published in *The Friend* (London) and the *Homiletic Review*, this book sets forth Jones' fundamental conviction that a conscious relationship with God gives the energy we need for our lives.⁹⁰ Jones emphasizes the power that God provides: 'But deeper and surer than all other invisible realities is that divine Spirit, not seen, but felt, who is the ground of our real being, the source of our longings, the inspirer of our larger hopes, the energy by which we live.'⁹¹ This divine power has to be seen, however, in relation to the effort that needs to be expended by individuals: 'The saint is no accidental

⁸⁷ R.M. Jones, *Stories of Hebrew Heroes* (London: Headley Brothers, 1911), 33

⁸⁸ There is some overlap here with Woolman's comments about conscience being heightened by obedience; see Chapter 5.

⁸⁹ Jones, *Hebrew Heroes*, 89.

⁹⁰ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 196.

⁹¹ The chapter 'The Deeper Universe' is published as a standalone book: R. M. Jones, *The Deeper Universe*, (Kessinger, [1918]), 11.

mutation. Moral dexterity of soul and beauty of character are the result of human effort and of cooperation with God.⁹² In other words, we see again the ‘mutual and reciprocal correspondence’ between humans and God, here in relation to inspiration and transformation in everyday life.

Fundamental Ends of Life (1925): Here Jones makes use of discoveries in science to argue that humans are not subject to original sin but naturally act for the good of others: ‘The entire stream of life was believed to be loaded with an irresistible nisus, or bent, toward self-survival, self-achievement ... Nobody thinks so now. Struggle for the life of others is just as much a “law” of nature as struggle for existence is ... We come “trailing clouds of glory” to this extent, that we are born with instinctive tendencies which make us interested in and concerned for others than ourselves.’⁹³ The use of Wordsworth’s expression ‘clouds of glory’ points to a divine aspect of human nature, which is identified here with a natural instinct to act for the benefit of others. In other words, human compassion has its origin in and is an expression of God’s compassion, so Jones is once again making humans and God inseparable.

London Friend (1927): Jones’ article ‘New Light on the “Inner Light”’ focuses on one of Kant’s papers ‘Opus Postumum’ that had recently become the subject of scholarly attention. He stressed that Kant had become ‘a positive interpreter of divine immanence and an advocate of a God who is revealed within the soul of man’.⁹⁴ Despite not mentioning Christ in the article, he concludes it by surmising that ‘I feel sure that Isaac Pennington would have said a solemn and quiet “amen” to these words, if he had heard them, for they fit perfectly with what he describes as his own experience of the healing which came into his soul from under God’s wings.’ This comment is of interest because Jones is suggesting that interpretations

⁹² Jones, *Deeper Universe*, 16.

⁹³ R.M. Jones, *The Fundamental Ends of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 10–11.

⁹⁴ Jones, ‘New light on the “Inner Light”’, 533–534.

of God's immanence that were not explicitly Christian were in fact consistent with the views and experience of early Quakers, who certainly self-identified as Christians.

The Faith and Practice of Quakers (1927): This book was one of a series edited by L. P. Jacks under the title 'The Faiths: Varieties of Christian Expression'. As already noted, Jones uses a quotation from Dean Inge on the frontispiece that sums up the essence of his message: 'The Quakers, of all Christian bodies, have remained nearest to the teaching and example of Christ'. In the book Jones denies the doctrine of original sin but does see God as essential to transforming humans: 'The Puritan saw in man a wreck like that of a ship hopelessly stranded on a reef of jagged rock. The Quaker saw in him a wreck, if wreck at all, like that of the buds in spring, burst from within by the warm sun, after having been tightly sealed all winter against sleet and storm, wrecked indeed, and by the push and power of a deeper, larger life working within and preparing for vast future possibilities.'⁹⁵ Crucially, Christ is here integral to this process: '[Quakers] have felt that theory and doctrines are "sounding brass and clanging cymbals" compared with the actual formation of the spirit of Christ in the fibre and structure of the inner life.'⁹⁶ Here again Jones is advocating an intimate relationship between God and humans (who are essentially good) and, moreover, describing it within a Christian framework.⁹⁷

New Studies in Mystical Religion (1927). The year before the publication of *New Studies*, Jones had had a memorable meeting with Gandhi. He wrote to Margaret Jones that the life of the Ashram was very simple and would delight John Woolman and that they had talked of Christ and Quakerism as a way of life.⁹⁸ In his journal, he

⁹⁵ Jones, *Faith and Practice*, 44.

⁹⁶ Jones, *Faith and Practice*, 49.

⁹⁷ It could be argued that Jones is presenting the views of Quakers rather than his own views, but this seems unlikely: he distances himself from the view of early Friends that the Inner Light as 'something supernaturally added' to the but does not do so in relation to Christ (Jones, *Faith and Practice*, 41).

⁹⁸ To Margaret Jones, 2 December 1926, HC Box 55.

described Gandhi as ‘an extraordinarily great man and a beautiful character’, but regretted that he had ‘very little of that universal mystical experience which is the ground and basis of a really universal spiritual religion’.⁹⁹ In these comments, then, we see Jones beginning to engage with religious experience beyond Christianity. More than that, he seems to be in favour of a ‘universal spiritual religion’, a position that is all the more intriguing given that the book was published in the same year as the unequivocally Christian *Faith and Practice*.

Perhaps inspired by his visit, Jones expresses the hope in *New Studies* that one day ‘we in the West will learn the secret which India has always possessed – that the soul is the eternally important fact and its testimony the ground of all truth.’¹⁰⁰ The book ends with a story from India: Eight hundred years before Christ, a king asked a sage ‘what is the light of man?’ The sage replied, ‘When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire is gone out, THE SOUL IS THE LIGHT OF MAN.’¹⁰¹ Taken at face value, the statement seems to preclude any association of the light with the historical Christ. Furthermore, it could be interpreted as implying that humans are divine. A few paragraphs earlier, however, Jones had insisted that ‘All the knowledge of God which is possessed by men has come to us in the last resort through some human consciousness of Him.’¹⁰² In other words, what Jones seems to mean, but arguably does not express very well, is that the soul is the light of man not in and of itself but by virtue of its relationship with God.

Pathways to the Reality of God (1931): Here Jones sets himself against the dualism he saw as characteristic of ‘the Barthian school’, namely their insistence that God must be ‘an absolute Other’. He insists that ‘If nothing of the divine nature can be expressed in the human then the incarnation of God in Christ has no real meaning or significance, and nothing that we say about God is anything more than a *flatus*

⁹⁹ Quoted in Vining, *Friend of Life*, 221.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *New Studies*, 204.

¹⁰¹ Jones, *New Studies*, 205.

¹⁰² Jones, *New Studies*, 204.

vocis, an empty breath of sound.¹⁰³ So, whereas Barth believed that knowledge of God is obtainable only through Christ, Jones believed that it is only because God is present in individuals that God can, in any case, be revealed in Christ.

A Preface to Christian Faith in a New Age (1932): In 1930, Jones was asked to be part of a commission of ecumenical laymen studying foreign missions in India, Burma, China and Japan. In preparation for the six-month trip, he gathered together a council of religious leaders and asked them the question 'What seem to you to be the most striking and difficult intellectual and practical obstacles to the revival and spread of Christian faith in the world of this present generation?' The result was *A Preface to Christian Faith*, which was addressed primarily to ministers but was chosen as the May 'book of the month' by the Religious Book Club.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps surprisingly, given its genesis, the chapter on 'The Testimony of Human Experience' wholeheartedly embraces the experience of God in other spiritual traditions.¹⁰⁵ Jones starts with the Book of Proverbs, which claims that 'the spirit of man is a candle of the lord'.¹⁰⁶ This, he says, represents something more than the testimony of a solitary individual – it bears the mark of communal experience. He goes on to link this experience to the experience of a Sufi poet of Persia, who in a similar phrase wrote: 'Every heart that has slept one night in Thy air, / O God, is like a radiant day'.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, Indian sages recognized that 'the soul is the light of man'; Confucius declared that 'Like the rush of mighty waters, the presence of unseen Powers is felt, sometimes above us and sometimes around us'; and a 'Mohammedan mystic' commanded 'Go sweep out the chamber of your heart, / Make it ready to be the dwelling place of the Beloved'.¹⁰⁸ Returning to Christian

¹⁰³ Jones, *Pathways*, 48.

¹⁰⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 229.

¹⁰⁵ R.M. Jones, *A Preface to Christian Faith in a New Age* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 71–105. For background on Jones' inclusive, but controversial, attitudes to other faiths, see Angell, 'Rufus Jones and the layman's foreign mission enquiry'.

¹⁰⁶ Jones, *Preface*, 91.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *Preface*, 92.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, *Preface*, 93–94,

mysticism, Jones asserts that the great saying of Christ, 'the Kingdom of God is in you', may be taken as 'a headwater source of this stream of mystical life'.¹⁰⁹ Jones here was in line with many scholars who were interpreting mysticism as a universal experience (see Chapter 8), and he is perhaps also echoing Clement, who was of the opinion that 'the way of truth is one, but into it, added to a never failing river, there flow different streams on this side and that'.¹¹⁰ What is relevant here is that the assertion that experience of God is found at different times and in different cultures is consistent with (although does not necessarily imply) Jones' view that God is part of human nature.

Spirit in Man (1941): This book comprises the three West memorial lectures given at Stanford University under the original title 'Implications of Man's Mind'.¹¹¹ In some ways it is similar to the 1927 article in *The London Friend* referenced above, in that Jones' approach is philosophical rather than Christian. The point to note here is that, as Aiken puts it, here 'Jones can define the Inner Light as "spirit" or "mind" without reference even to God, let alone Christ'.¹¹²

A Call to What is Vital (1948): Jones' final book was conceived following a conversation with a 'prominent Quaker of New England', who urged him to write a book 'that will help the college-trained persons who have the scientific outlook to find their way back to a vital religion'.¹¹³ There is no doubt that the religion in question was Christianity. Here again he stresses that the incarnation means that we have to reinterpret human nature such that there is 'mutual and reciprocal correspondence between the divine and the human'.¹¹⁴ The 'scientific outlook' promised in the book seems somewhat dated, however. Jones is still quoting

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Preface*, 94.

¹¹⁰ Ware and Louth, 'Clement of Alexandria', 37.

¹¹¹ R. M. Jones, *Spirit in Man* (Berkeley, CA: Peacock Press, 1963).

¹¹² Aiken 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?', 43.

¹¹³ Jones, *Call to what is Vital*, vi.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *Call to what is Vital*, 111.

James, that 'the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come' rather than engaging with Freud or Jung.¹¹⁵

7.3.2 Some comments on Jones' thought post-Social Law

The above survey of Jones' corpus reveals that the human–divine relationship, or Inner Light, was a constant preoccupation throughout his life. If we are to believe his assertion in *A Dynamic Faith*, his fundamental position does not change, although the way he expresses himself certainly does.

In particular, there is a move away from the historical Christ in some discussions, but a more explicitly Christian presentation in some of his books addressed to Quakers. The year 1927 is especially notable in this regard. *Faith and Practice* uses Christian terminology, in that the spirit of Christ is within; *New Studies* sees the soul as the light of man in all religions; and the article in the *London Friend* discusses divine immanence without reference to Christ. While these expressions might on the surface seem incompatible, it needs to be borne in mind that, from Chapter 6, Jones viewed the spirit of God, as revealed supremely in Christ, as immanent in creation, so even though the terminology used to describe the human–divine relationship varies in the examples given here, the underlying message is the same.

These shifts in expression notwithstanding, a number of recurring themes can be identified in Jones' perception of the Inner Light that relate to previous discussions about God, Christ and human nature. First, Jones never conceives of the soul without reference to God. This and his attempts to balance the power that God provides and human effort make it clear that he is not a secular humanist. Second, Jones believes that an individual's capacity to hear God is increased by obedience, so the Inner Light is not stagnant but is strengthened, or brightens, perhaps. Furthermore, because Jones believed that individuals are transformed by good deeds (Chapter 5), this 'brightening' is accompanied by the transformation of the

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Call to what is Vital*, 66.

individual, a conviction that finds expression in Clement's conception of the 'harmonized man'.

What is also notable is that there is no attempt after *Social Law* to provide evidence for this inherent view of the Inner Light. This is in spite of the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 5, in later years Jones regretted his reliance on James' theory of the subconscious and in *Spiritual Reformers* goes as far as to say that experience of God is *not* an 'experience that attaches itself to the very nature of consciousness'.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The Inner Light has always been a central, arguably the defining, concept in Quakerism. It has always resisted precise definition though, and different conceptions of it have historically caused schisms within Quakerism and shaped the practices and beliefs of the resulting groups. Broadly speaking, 17th century Quakers associated the Inner Light with Christ and defended their position biblically. Eighteenth century Quietist Quakers emphasized the inner witness of the Inner Light at the expense of the Bible and reason, developing a somewhat passive spirituality structured around listening for a voice from beyond themselves. Those 19th century Quakers influenced by evangelicalism viewed Scripture as more authoritative than the Light and associated the Light with the Holy Spirit, whereas others saw this trend as threatening the very essence of Quakerism. At the beginning of the 20th century, Jones radically reshaped the way in which liberal Quakers thought about the concept, casting his view against the dualistic understanding that he attributed to Barclay.

Social Law constituted Jones' first written expression of his ideas on the Inner Light, although they had been aired at summer conferences in 1901 and 1903. Jones

¹¹⁶ Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, xxii.

claims in his chapter on the Inner Light that the Bible, the Fathers, philosophy, psychology and experience all supported the idea that the Inner Light was part of human nature. Perhaps because of his deliberate *theological naivety* and *informal style*, however, the evidence he provides is fairly superficial and he does not engage with possible objections, which are in fact fairly easy to find.

Regarding biblical evidence, Jones used ‘proof texts’ to support his claim but ignored the strand of biblical thought that views humans and God as separate, even though he was aware of it. His evidence from the Fathers (not detailed in *Social Law* itself) is equally ambivalent, as his interpretations of Clement and Augustine are unconventional. Regarding philosophical/psychological evidence, Jones complains that transformation of the person is not possible with the Barclayan view of the Inner Light, but in fact Barclay himself envisaged that individuals would be ‘leavened’ by the seed of God within. Furthermore, his reliance on Pascal’s statement that one needs in some sense to have found God before searching for God is also inconclusive: it is consistent with Barclay’s view, in that a ‘foreign seed’ within could cause an individual to search for God, and in that sense, God is on some level already ‘found’. Finally, Jones’ formulation requires that in theory everyone should experience spiritual certitude, but this is not borne out in practice, as exemplified by William Littleboy. Although Jones does offer passing remarks to explain this lack of experience, which he acknowledges at times in other works, he does not give the issue sufficient attention, given that it is such a basic implication of his formulation of the Inner Light. This is, perhaps, a reflection of the fact that he seemed to take his own experience as normative, a propensity I have referred to as his *experiential basis*.

My survey of Jones’ use of the Inner Light in his wider corpus revealed that, while Jones claimed that he retained this view of the Inner Light throughout his life, he expressed himself in a variety of ways in relation to a Christian framework. As we will see in Chapter 9, this has led to a variety of interpretations of his thought. It is

also significant that nowhere else does he attempt to justify his view in the way he does in *Social Law*, nor to reformulate it in the face of potential problems arising from the work of Freud and Jung.

The weaknesses of Jones' arguments aside, it is clear that what he was attempting to do was to bring Quakerism into alignment with modern thought. He was making Quakerism consistent with his interpretation of Christianity as detailed in the last three chapters by associating the view of human nature he obtained from synthesizing liberal Christianity, idealism and psychology with the quintessentially Quaker concept of the Inner Light.

This task was aided by the fact that, as noted in Chapter 3, liberal Christianity and Quakerism had some important similarities: for example, they shared (i) an optimistic view of human nature, (ii) a commitment to social reform, and (iii) an emphasis on experience. All three of these similarities can be expressed in relation to the Inner Light. In particular, they can be related to the three attributes of the Inner Light identified by Jones (see Section 7.2 above), namely that the Inner Light is (i) a Divine life resident in the soul, (ii) a source of guidance and illumination, and (iii) the ground of spiritual certitude. That is, the two sets of points are related as follows: (i) an optimistic view of human nature is a natural consequence of God being resident in the soul; (ii) a concern for social reform goes hand in hand with the Inner Light as a source of guidance (to be discussed in Chapter 8); (iii) the emphasis on experience is a necessary corollary of seeing the Inner Light as a source of spiritual certitude.

Jones' views of the Inner Light have proved enormously influential. Given the weaknesses of his arguments that I have identified here, this influence arguably rests on somewhat shaky foundations. This accusation is serious but not without precedent: T. Vail Palmer disagreed with Jones' interpretation of Quakerism as historically a mystical religion and concluded that, because of Jones' mistake,

contemporary Quakerism is 'founded on an egregious misunderstanding'.¹¹⁷

Chapter 9 will explore Jones' influence in more detail by tracing how his ideas were received both by his contemporaries and by later Quakers and scholars of Quakerism. First, though, we turn to look at how Jones' ideas about the Inner Light were incorporated in the dominant framework for expressing religious experience in the early 20th century – mysticism.

¹¹⁷ D. E. Bassuk, 'Rufus Jones and mysticism', *Quaker Religious Thought* 46 (1978): 4.

Chapter 8

Mysticism is a felt experience of God

Any person who has these moments of consciousness in which he feels his relationship to the Infinite is so far a mystic'.¹

As we have seen, Jones' synthesis of Quakerism and modern thought meant that he saw the Inner Light as an inherent part of human nature. This chapter will argue that this novel formulation of the Inner Light was, in turn, integral to his view of mysticism. Indeed, I will suggest that Jones' understanding of mysticism represents the pinnacle of his synthesis, being an ingenious blend of his formulation of the Inner Light gained from idealism and psychology, the contemporary interest in the Social Gospel, the traditional Quaker emphasis on experience and social action, and his own awareness of God from childhood onwards.

Mysticism was a natural framework for Jones to use to express his thought about the human–divine relationship because it was a topic of huge interest to both scholars and the general public in early 20th century America. Jones was an enthusiastic participant in academic and lay conversations, and his association with mysticism is so strong that he has been called the founder of mystical Quakerism.² In fact, his influence in this area reached far beyond the confines of the Society. Howard Thurman, a prominent civil rights leader, was inspired by Jones' message about the social utility of mystical experience, and Harry Emerson Fosdick, a well-known 20th century liberal preacher and broadcaster, vigorously promoted both

¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 142.

² Cooper, 'Reflections', 31.

pacifism and a psychologically informed mysticism under the influence of Jones.³ More generally, the historian Michael Hedstrom claims that Jones made mysticism middlebrow in the 1930s, and Patricia Appelbaum notes that he was an influential figure within a Protestant movement that practised 'presence mysticism', a form of mysticism that assumed the constant presence of God in a way that provided strength for work for peace and social action.⁴ Beyond even Protestantism, Schmidt holds that Jones played a significant role in developing America's 'spiritual-but-not-religious' culture.⁵

Given Jones' legacy in regard to mysticism, it is important to establish what he meant by the term, how it is related to his ideas about God and the Inner Light, and how his contribution was distinctive. I will suggest that in *Social Law*, Jones' understanding of mysticism has two main components. The first is that it involves an experience of God. The second is that this experience should ideally lead to action, although in practice it sometimes does not. Jones therefore differentiated between negation mystics, who desired an experience of ecstasy as an end in itself, and affirmation mystics, who aimed to transform the world based on this felt encounter with God. Affirmation mysticism, then, can be seen as the means by which the Inner Light is manifested in practice: it involves an experience of God that results in guidance regarding social action and provides the strength to act.

The above interpretation of Jones' mysticism is not universally held, however. Hugh Rock recently claimed that Jones' mysticism involves thought not feeling and that talk of God is a gloss.⁶ Rock's conclusion will be addressed in detail in the next chapter, which deals with the interpretation of Jones' thought, but the discrepancy between my interpretation and Rock's is perhaps an indication that more research

³ M. Hedstrom, 'The Quakerization of everything', *Quaker Religious Thought* 122 (2014): 39–40.

⁴ Hedstrom, 'Mysticism for the masses'; Appelbaum, 'Protestant mysticism', 1–24.

⁵ Schmidt, *Restless Souls*, 237. Note that Quakers today tend to refer to spirituality rather than mysticism; see Chapter 10.

⁶ Rock, 'Rufus Jones never did establish', 61.

into Jones' understanding of mysticism, rather than into its impact, is needed. The above-cited authors, Hedstrom, Schmidt and Appelbaum, for example, approach Jones' mysticism through the discipline of religious studies rather than offering a comprehensive analysis of Jones' use of the term itself: Hedstrom explores the role that Jones' books played in American liberal culture; Schmidt takes in the grand sweep of the development of American spirituality; and Appelbaum discusses four mid-20th century mystics who were influenced by Jones' conception of a 'spiritual religion'.⁷ A further approach to Jones' mysticism is that of Paul Marshall, who refers to Jones in the context of mystical epistemology, considering what type of knowledge can be gained through mystical experiences, and cites him as an early proponent of the view that religious experiences have a real 'mystical object' but are mediated by social and religious expectations.⁸

Works that do offer a description of Jones' mysticism are over 50 years old. Vining provides an uncritical analysis in a chapter in her biography,⁹ and a 1960 PhD thesis by Atkins, 'A critical examination of the mystical idealism of Rufus Jones', argues that Jones reconciled the tension between the intellectual approach to mysticism exemplified by Jonathan Edwards and William James and the informal development and practice of mystical religion exemplified by John Woolman, Emerson and Whitman.¹⁰

What is missing, then, is a historically sensitive analysis of Jones' view of mysticism that relates it to his views on God and the Inner Light. Here I first give some historical context: Section 8.1 summarizes how mysticism evolved from being somewhat marginal and disreputable to a respectable field of research at the turn of the 20th century, and Section 8.2 discusses Jones' relationship with some of his

⁷ Hedstrom, 'Mysticism for the masses'; Schmidt, *Restless Souls*; Appelbaum, 'Protestant mysticism'.

⁸ P. Marshall, *Mystical Encounters with the Natural World: Experiences and Explanations* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 179.

⁹ Vining, *Friend of Life*, Chapter 23.

¹⁰ Atkins, *Mystical Idealism of Rufus Jones*, 9–10.

contemporaries, namely Evelyn Underhill, William Inge, Friedrich von Hügel and Francis Peabody. These two sections thus provide the context for Jones' views both before and after the publication of *Social Law*. Section 8.3 deals with Jones' views themselves, specifically his characterization of mysticism, his introduction of the terms affirmation and negation mysticism, and his Quaker-inspired conviction that mysticism flourished best in a group. My focus is on the presentation of mysticism in *Social Law*, but I also illustrate how the views therein were expressed in his wider corpus. I conclude that Jones' understanding of affirmation mysticism draws together many of the themes considered in earlier chapters and therefore constitutes a coherent synthesis of his thought.

8.1 Mysticism in historical context

Mysticism has had a chequered history regarding both understandings of the term itself and its reputation. In this section I give a very brief overview of some of the main strands in the development of mystical terminology, and of how opinions of it changed in the latter half of the 19th century. The historical context is drawn mainly from Schmidt's 2003 paper, but I relate the historical developments therein to Jones.

8.1.1 The roots of mystical terminology

The word 'mystica' came into Christianity through the 5th century Syrian monk known as Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.¹¹ It derives from the Greek term *mu*, which has connotations of secrecy (as in the phrase 'keeping mum'). For Pseudo-Dionysius, mystical theology involved secrecy of mind, or a state of consciousness beyond knowing that experienced God as 'a ray of divine Dark'.¹² He proposed two

¹¹ In line with accepted conventions, this unknown monk claimed authority by purporting to be Dionysius, a convert of Paul at Areopagus (Acts 17).

¹² Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 109.

ways in which God could be encountered: the affirmative and the negative path. According to Jones' analysis of Pseudo-Dionysius, seekers on the affirmative path gather what light they can from the revelation of God in a process akin to that of gathering crumbs that fall from the Divine table. This way is, however, limited: it is like trying to know someone only through the shadows they cast. Ultimately, knowledge itself must be transcended and the soul must rise to a union with God.¹³ Pseudo-Dionysius uses the image of the sculptor (drawn from Plotinus) to illustrate the situation: just as the sculptor removes material to bring to light the hidden Beauty within, 'So we abstract (negate) everything in order that *without* veils we may know that Unknown which is concealed by all the light in existing things.'¹⁴ The negative, or apophatic, theology introduced by Pseudo-Dionysius thus stresses the inability of human ideas to convey the reality of God. There are ways to discover truths about God from his manifestations in the world, but these are inferior to a mystical union.

The writings of Pseudo-Dionysius surfaced in the 6th century, were translated into Latin by John Scotus Erigena in the 9th century, and proved to be enormously influential within the Western monastic tradition from the 12th century onwards. In his Introduction to the 14th century classic *The Cloud of Unknowing*, for example, Wolters notes that Dionysius' authority on spiritual matters was unquestioned at this time and that *The Cloud* 'shows his influence on every page'.¹⁵ The anonymous author addresses his 'friend in God', advising, for example, 'Reconcile yourself to wait in this darkness as long as is necessary, but still go on longing after him whom you love. For if you are to feel him or to see him in this life, it must always be in this cloud, in this darkness.'¹⁶ Similarly, the influential 16th century Spanish Carmelite John of the Cross writes in the *Ascent to Mount Carmel* that 'To reach this essential

¹³ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 108.

¹⁴ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 109.

¹⁵ C. E. Wolters (ed.), *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works* (London: Penguin, 1978), 20.

¹⁶ Wolters, *Cloud*, 62.

union of love of God, a person must be careful not to lean upon imaginative visions, forms, figures, or particular ideas, since they cannot serve as a proportionate and proximate means for such an effect; they would be a hindrance instead.¹⁷ The Church did not always embrace such attitudes though, and was often hostile to claims of unmediated, imageless communion with God, which might make it redundant or lead people astray.¹⁸

The term ‘mysticism’ did not, however, exist in the early decades of the 18th century. The prevailing category was ‘mystic theology’, which was a way of life involving prayer, contemplation and self-denial. The term mysticism was first used in the mid-18th century as a criticism of enthusiasm and carried connotations of misplaced sexuality. Mystics themselves were associated with sects, such that the 1797 entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defined mystics as ‘a kind of religious sect, distinguished by their professing pure, sublime, and perfect devotion’, citing Quietists, Quakers and Methodists as examples.¹⁹ Sixty years later, however, ‘mysticism’ had become the defining category. Furthermore, the texts of the major spiritual traditions were beginning to be translated, and the definition of mysticism had a universalist tone. In the 1858 edition of the *Britannica*, the characteristics of mysticism were held to be the same, ‘whether they find expression in the Bagvat-Gita of the Hindu, or in the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg’.²⁰ The following years saw the formation of various subspecies of mysticism, such as Oriental mysticism, Neo-Platonic mysticism, etc. Jones, for example, published a review of a book entitled ‘Jewish Mysticism’.²¹

By the time Jones wrote *Social Law*, definitions of mysticism had proliferated. Inge lists and critiques 26 definitions in the appendix of his 1899 *Christian Mysticism*,

¹⁷ Quoted in D. Chowning, ‘Free to love: negation in the doctrine of John of the Cross’, in *Carmelite Studies VI: John of the Cross*, ed. S. Payne (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1992), 44.

¹⁸ See, for example, D. MacCulloch, *Silence* (London: Penguin, 2013), 157.

¹⁹ Schmidt, ‘Making of modern “mysticism”’, 280.

²⁰ Schmidt, ‘Making of modern “mysticism”’, 282.

²¹ R. M. Jones, ‘Jewish Mysticism’, *Harvard Theological Review* 36 (1943): 155–163.

while acknowledging that the list could be made much longer. Mysticism according to Goethe, for example, is 'the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings'.²² The decades that followed did nothing to bring clarity, and the ambivalent heritage of the term is apparent in Jones' complaint as late as 1937 that 'In most modern scientific laboratories the word mysticism is even now used to connote "spurious knowledge," occult lore, or abnormal phenomena. The student is given the impression that the word stands for claptrap and mental rubbish.'²³

8.1.2 How mysticism captured the public imagination

Diverse definitions notwithstanding, mysticism captured the public imagination to the extent that a writer in the *Church Quarterly Review* in 1906 declared that the United States was a country in which 'mysticism' and a 'craving for spiritual experiences' had 'run mad'.²⁴ Within Quakerism, this interest is apparent in a program of talks given at Germantown monthly meeting in 1928 (Figure 8.1). The talks are on the theme of the search for God in a variety of religions, with mysticism being an explicit or implicit component in a number of cases.²⁵ This interest is also apparent in a letter to Jones from one of his colleagues, Douglas Steere. Writing from a Methodist conference, Steere reported that the delegates were 'remarkably appreciative' and 'intensely interested' in a talk he had given on the subject. His letter also reveals the mistrust of lay mysticism by ecclesiastical authority though, as he goes on to complain that in public these same delegates 'spout broadsides against mysticism without any clear notion of what they are attacking except a kind of vacuous vagueness of feeling that some of their parishioners have substituted for religion'.²⁶

²² W.R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: Methuen, 1899), 338.

²³ Jones, *Testimony*, 200.

²⁴ Schmidt, 'Making of modern "mysticism"', 284.

²⁵ Retrieved from Ancestry.com: Swarthmore College; Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; *Minutes, 1924-1935*; Collection: *Quaker Meeting Records*; Call Number: *MR Ph 190*.

²⁶ Douglas Steere, 1 July 1931, HC Box 31.

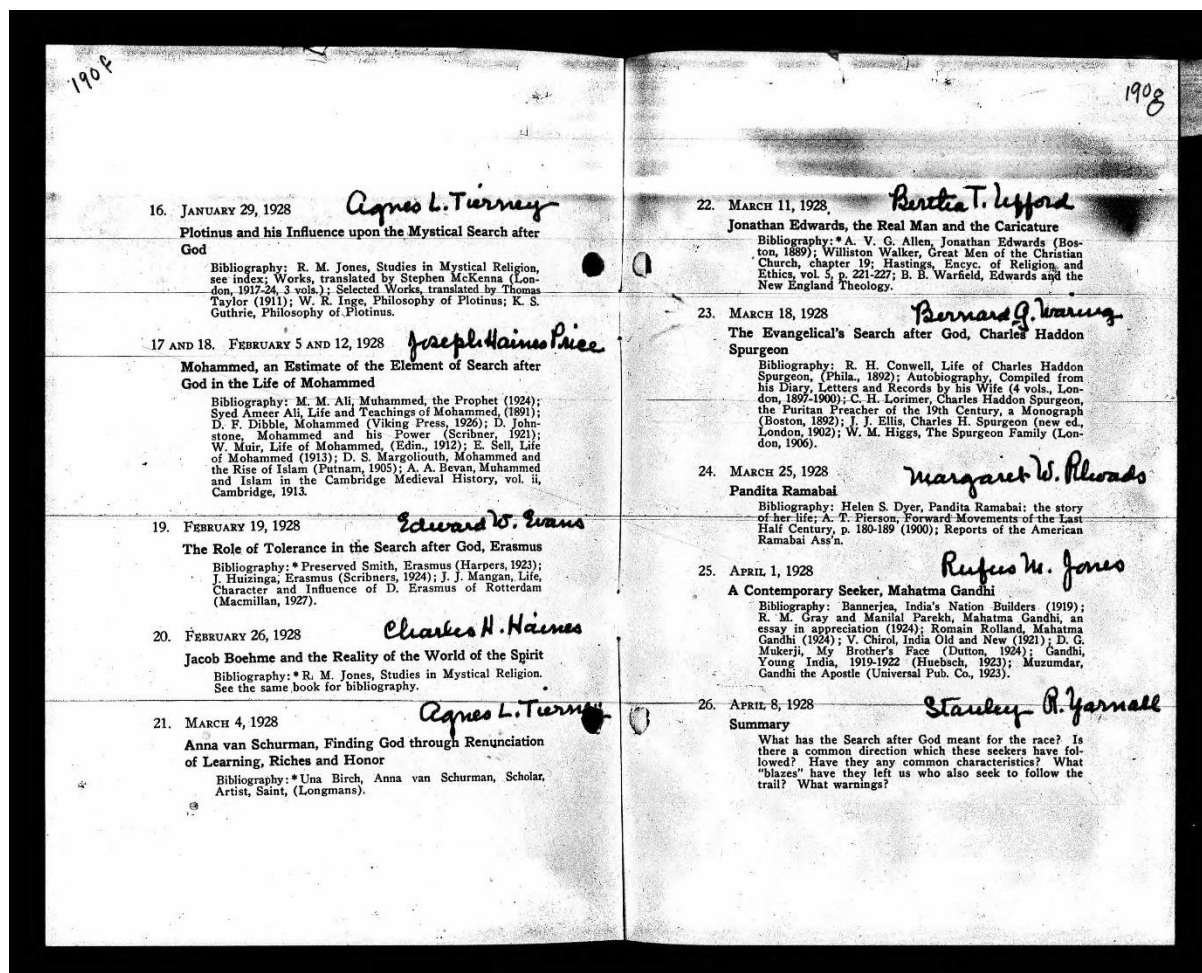


Figure 8.1. Program of talks at Germantown Monthly Meeting in 1928.²⁷

Something clearly happened in the 19th century to shift mysticism from an association with sects to a field of academic study and lay fascination. The emerging translations of religious texts from non-Christian religions were an important factor, but Schmidt argues that the decisive event was the publication of Robert Alfred Vaughan's seminal two-volume work *Hours with the Mystics*.²⁸ The book was immensely popular, and in fact the 1858 article in the *Britannica* referred to above was a summary of its main points. *Hours* presents a somewhat meandering history of mysticism in the form of a conversation among three friends (Gower, Atherton

²⁷ Retrieved from ancestry.com: Swarthmore College; Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; *Minutes, 1924-1935*; Collection: *Quaker Meeting Records*; Call Number: MR Ph 190.

²⁸ R. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, 2 vols (London: John Parker, 1856).

and Willoughby) as they settle down to enjoy wine and walnuts on a November evening as the fire 'crackled and sparkled, and the wind without moaned about the corners of the house'.²⁹ The three men explore, with occasional digressions as they move to the drawing room, or enjoy summer picnics, how mysticism found expression among different nations and in different periods. Thus chapter titles include topics such as 'Characteristics of Hindoo Mysticism' and 'The Mysticism of Bernard'. Vaughan's prevailing attitude, as captured by a reviewer at the time, is 'a certain want of sympathy with the mystical aspect of religion', which the reviewer identified as its 'contemplative and experimental side'.³⁰ Rather, he says, Vaughan's sympathies are with mysticism's 'common-sense, robust, world-shouldering, militant manifestations'. St Theresa, for example, is, in Vaughan's view, 'vision-craving' and 'sentimental'.³¹

The book certainly captivated the young Jones, who, as noted in Chapter 2, read and re-read it as a student at Haverford.³² Jones is in agreement with a number of Vaughan's views: he too was suspicious of anything abnormal, preferring an active, everyday form of mysticism. They also both criticized the 'negative way' of Pseudo-Dionysius. In *Hours*, Vaughan has 'Gower' waxing lyrical, explaining how Pseudo-Dionysius' theology is akin to his entering a wood, where he 'extinguishes the many twinkling lights the sunshine hung wavering in the foliage, silences all sounds of singing, and fills the darkened aisles and domes with a coldly-descending mist, whose silence is extolled as above the power of utterance'.³³ 'Willoughby' is equally adamant, if less poetic, in his condemnation: 'I cannot get that wretched abstraction out of my head which the Neo-Platonists call deity. How such a notion must have dislocated all their ethics from head to foot!'³⁴ Likewise, Jones concluded

²⁹ R. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, 3rd edn, Vol. 1 (London: Gibbings & Co., 1893), 3.

³⁰ 'Vaughan's Hours with the Mystics', *London Quarterly Review*, Oct.1862-Jan.1932, 57(113) (1881): 199.

³¹ R. Vaughan, *Hours with the Mystics*, Vol. 2 (London: John Parker, 1856), 161.

³² Jones, *Life in College*, 133.

³³ Vaughan, *Hours*, Vol. 1, 118.

³⁴ Vaughan, *Hours*, Vol. 1, 120.

that the ideas of pseudo-Dionysius were 'Neoplatonic philosophy slightly sprinkled with baptismal water from a Christian font'.³⁵ He disliked the speculation about the roles of angels, the portrayal of the spiritual journey as a solitary undertaking, the goal of gazing on God that ignored the world, and the inherent pantheism. He did acknowledge, however, that pseudo-Dionysius 'kindled in multitudes of souls a pure passion for God'.³⁶

A number of factors helped to fuel the fascination in mysticism aroused by *Hours*. In America, the Transcendentalists played a vital role. Under their influence, mysticism loosened its ties with Christianity and became, in Schmidt's words, 'loosely spiritual, intuitive, emancipatory, and universal'.³⁷ William James gave the mystic cause a significant boost in *Varieties*, conferring scientific credibility on religious experience and, in line with the Transcendentalists, claiming that religious feelings are the same for 'Stoic, Christian, and Buddhist saints'.³⁸ Furthermore, religious liberals recognized that mysticism offered a refuge from an increasingly scientific and materialistic worldview. As early as 1878 an article in the *Methodist Quarterly Review* warned that mysticism was needed more than ever because the general drift of thought was antagonistic to the spiritual and the eternal.³⁹ Finally, simple curiosity about other religions seems to have played a role. William Inge expressed the prevailing attitude in a letter to Jones in 1947, writing that, 'Like [Aldous] Huxley and many others I have been captivated by Indian thought ... Just when we are losing India we are finding out just how much we might have learned from them.'⁴⁰

In summary, the negative mystical theology as formulated by pseudo-Dionysius found its way into the Christian mystical tradition, and Vaughan captured academic and public imagination in mysticism as a phenomenon that occurred in all religions

³⁵ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 110.

³⁶ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, 111.

³⁷ Schmidt, 'Making of modern "mysticism"', 286.

³⁸ James, *Varieties*, 504.

³⁹ Schmidt, 'Making of modern "mysticism"', 289.

⁴⁰ W.R. Inge, 12 June 1947, HC Box 46.

through *Hours with the Mystics*. Jones was captivated by *Hours* and echoed Vaughan's dislike of abnormal manifestations. In the early decades of the 20th century, interest was fuelled by the influence of the Transcendentalists, the liberal agenda, James' psychological approach and the availability of non-Christian religious texts. The term itself, though, eluded a concise and universally accepted definition and often carried esoteric connotations

8.2 Jones and contemporary scholars of mysticism

This enthusiasm for mysticism spawned a host of publications. Around the time of *Social Law*, books published on the topic included *Christian Mysticism* (William Inge, 1899), *Varieties* (William James, 1902), *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* (Inge, 1907), *The Mystical Element in Religion* (Friedrich von Hügel, 1908), *Mysticism* (Evelyn Underhill 1911) and *The Idea of the Holy* (Rudolph Otto, 1917). Jones participated enthusiastically in this surge of academic interest, publishing numerous books and articles and forging trans-Atlantic friendships with the above writers.⁴¹ This section first gives a brief overview of some of the mystical works of Jones' corpus and then introduces some of his contemporaries in the field.

8.2.1 Jones' mystical corpus

Social Law contains the first detailed explanation of Jones' view of mysticism, but it was a topic he would return to again and again throughout his life. To take just three examples, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909) was designed to be an introduction to the Rowntree history series. This lengthy book (500+ pages) focuses on the mystics that Jones believed were the forerunners of Quakerism: there are chapters on Plato, Plotinus, the Church Fathers, St Francis and the Anabaptists, among others. Aspects of mysticism that resonated with Jones' perception of

⁴¹ Jones, 'Jewish mysticism', 155.

Quakerism (the importance of practical service, inner experience) are extolled, whereas asceticism and abnormal experiences are denigrated.⁴² *New Studies in Mysticism* was published in 1927 and contains chapters on mystical religion as it related to the abnormal, asceticism, religious education and organization. Here again, there is a clear antipathy to anything not involved in ordinary, day-to-day life: 'If mysticism were nothing but a series of trances or ecstatic states', Jones declares, 'it would surely be a doubtful asset for religion, and we should be hanging our spiritual hopes on a flimsy cable.'⁴³ As a final example, *The Luminous Trail* (1947) was written when Jones was in his eighties. It describes a somewhat eclectic selection of saints, 'whether canonized or not', whom Jones deemed to have been 'open-windowed to God'.⁴⁴ Thus, while there are stalwarts such as Paul, John, Francis of Assisi, the final chapter considers his son Lowell, who had died at age 11 over 40 years previously. Jones was of the opinion that 'his life was so full of promise, the attitude of direction was so marked, that I am convinced he belongs in my list here'.⁴⁵ The choice likely says as much about Jones' egalitarian view of mysticism and his paternal pride and grief than it does about the Lowell's nascent saintliness.

8.2.2 Underhill, Inge, von Hügel and Peabody

In order to identify Jones' distinctive contribution to the study of mysticism, I offer here a few very broad comments on the views of Evelyn Underhill, Friedrich von Hügel, William Inge (also referred to as Dean Inge, in respect of his position from 1911 until 1935 as Dean of St Paul's Cathedral) and Francis Peabody, in particular as they relate to Quakerism.⁴⁶

⁴² For a review, see Vining, *Friend of Life*, 125–127.

⁴³ Jones, *New Studies*, 49.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Luminous Trail*, 1.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Luminous Trail*, 153.

⁴⁶ Further details and a comparison of the first three writers can be found in Brown's PhD thesis (Brown, *The Doctrine of God*).

Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852–1925) was born in Florence but settled in England, where he became a prominent Catholic layman. He argued that there are three elements in religion that correspond to the three great forces of the soul: (1) the sensory and memory force corresponds to the external element of religion, described as historical, traditional and institutional; (2) reasoning is related to the speculative, theological element; and (3) intuition and feeling are related to the mystical element.⁴⁷ Whereas it is probably fair to say that Jones emphasized the third element (although he by no means ignored the other two), von Hügel insisted that there should be balance among the three. In practice this means that, for example, silent prayer is legitimate but it must be accompanied by vocal prayer, church attendance and sacramental acts to keep it 'safe and wholesome'.⁴⁸

Evelyn Underhill (1875–1941) is perhaps best known for her book *Mysticism*, first published in 1911 and in numerous subsequent editions.⁴⁹ Her thoughts on mysticism developed over her life, in part because of von Hügel, who as her spiritual director encouraged her to become involved in social work and to embrace a more Christocentric position.⁵⁰ She was a respected retreat leader and later in life a prominent member of the Anglo-Catholic community.

Underhill believed there were five stages in the mystical life (the awakening of the self, purgation, illumination, the Dark night of the soul, and union), and endorsed specific techniques for prayer.⁵¹ Jones, as we will see, felt that neither a prescribed path nor techniques were necessary and was more concerned with the practical outcomes of mystic experience. James Pratt summed up the difference nicely in a letter to Jones:

⁴⁷ For a summary of von Hügel's thought, see Brown, *The Doctrine of God*, 16–46.

⁴⁸ Brown, *The Doctrine of God*, 36.

⁴⁹ E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, 12th edn (New York: Meridian, 1930).

⁵⁰ For a summary of Underhill's thought, see Brown, *The Doctrine of God*, 47–96.

⁵¹ See, for example, the advice she gives to one of her correspondents in C. Williams (ed.) *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991), 73.

Your position seems to me not only strong but extremely important. If mysticism is to be a vital & really influential thing in our day it must be divorced from the particular and provincial formulations of the Middle Ages – such as the Stages of the “Mystic Way”. Too bad that one who has done so much to increase contemporary interest in mysticism as Evelyn Underhill should also have done so much to rivet its ancient chains.⁵²

Jones and Underhill also disagreed about the value of abnormal phenomena. In *Mysticism*, Underhill takes issue with Jones’ complaint that the stigmata of St Francis were the marks of emotional and physical abnormality, declaring that ‘it may well be doubted whether that flame of living love which could, for new dazzling instant, weld body and soul one, was really a point of weakness in a saint.’⁵³

Intriguingly, though, Underhill must at some point have veered towards some aspects of Quakerism, as von Hügel evidently took her to task her about what she referred to as her ‘Quakerish leanings’. She recounts in a letter that he felt that such an interior religion worked well in one’s exalted moments, but failed in ordinary daily life: on the whole, ‘a steady-going parish priest like a dear nice eiderdown(!)’ was more suitable than any prophet. Underhill admitted that she found this a ‘hard and dreary doctrine’ but could not disagree.⁵⁴ Jones himself seemed frustrated by Underhill’s failure to grasp Quaker spirituality, however, complaining in a letter to Violet Holdsworth that ‘she is quite unable to appreciate or even to understand the full meaning of Quaker worship without sacraments’.⁵⁵ So perhaps von Hügel’s warning had its desired effect.

Inge’s views have certain similarities to Jones’. In fact, on more than one occasion he wrote to Jones of his affinity to Quakerism.⁵⁶ In 1925 he admitted that ‘I read all

⁵² James Pratt, 26 April 1915, HC Box 14.

⁵³ Underhill, *Mysticism*, 267.

⁵⁴ Williams, *Letters*, 144.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Vining, *Friend of Life*, 257.

⁵⁶ It might be thought strange that such an eminent churchman should harbour Quaker leanings, but Inge disliked the services at St Paul’s. In his diary, he describes them as a ‘criminal waste of time’, complaining that ‘I have held different views at different times about the character and nature of the Creator of the Universe; but never at any time have I thought it at all probable that he is the type of

your books, and find myself in ever growing sympathy with the type of Christianity professed by the Society of Friends'.⁵⁷ By 1947 (at which point Inge was 87), this sympathy had evidently increased to the point where he could write, 'I often think of our delightful visit to Haverford and of your kindness to us. Bernard Shaw told me that I am a Quaker, and I believe I am.'⁵⁸ In *Mysticism in Religion* (written one year later, in 1948), he quotes with approval Jones' claim that Christianity is a religion of first-hand experience.⁵⁹ He was cautious about identifying the subconscious with the 'inmost sanctuary of the soul', however, warning that 'There is nothing respectable about the subconscious as such. It is not as foul as Freud makes out, but it is not the seat of what is best in us.'⁶⁰ Jones had recognized similar problems with the subconscious by this time too, but as noted in the last chapter had not reformulated his concept of the Inner Light. Inge's comments about being a Quaker thus raise questions, which are beyond the scope of this thesis, about to what extent he was aware of Jones' 1904 formulation and how closely he associated it with Quakerism.

We met Francis Peabody in Chapter 2, and his relevance here is that Social Gospel Protestants insisted that mysticism and political activism could not be separated.⁶¹ Peabody gave an address to students at Bryn Mawr, the Quaker college associated with Haverford, in which he identified two links between mysticism and action. The first is that it is the experience of communion with God that gives the mystic that 'rare endowment of power' that enables him to serve the world.⁶² The second is the recognition of the 'worth and dignity of the individual soul', which means that the

person who enjoys being serenaded!' Soon after his installation he took to reading a book in his stall during services, a practice that seems to have been both acknowledged and tolerated by others. (A. Fox, *Dean Inge* (London: John Murray, 1960), 115.)

⁵⁷ W. R. Inge, 1925 (no date), HC Box 24.

⁵⁸ W. R. Inge, 12 June 1947, HC Box 46.

⁵⁹ W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion* (London: Hutchison, undated edition [1948]), 23.

⁶⁰ Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, 161–162.

⁶¹ Schmidt, 'Making of modern "mysticism"', 293.

⁶² F. G. Peabody, 'Mysticism and modern life', *Harvard Theological Review* 7 (1914): 467.

sins and wrongs of society become the 'natural object of attack'.⁶³ In other words, social action is enabled by power from God and motivated by a theologically inspired view of humans as possessing an inherent worth. As noted in Chapter 7, this latter association between human worth and an ethical imperative was made by many liberal/modernist Quakers.

Jones admired all the above scholars, although it was only Peabody, whom he had come to know in 1900/01 at Harvard, that he knew at the time of *Social Law*. He met von Hügel while in England in 1923, recounting that 'The old philosopher and mystic stood up in front of me, half a head taller than I was', and, raising his hands as high as they could reach, insisted that 'a saint must be *radiant*'.⁶⁴ Indeed, Jones dedicated *New Studies* 'to the beautiful memory of my friend Baron Friedrich von Hügel, who strikingly illustrated the meaning of radiance in religion'. Inge and his wife enjoyed a visit with the Joneses in Haverford in the early 1920s, during which Jones and Inge gave lectures at the Bellevue-Stratford hotel in Philadelphia. Rufus Jones folklore holds that Jones secretly cleaned the shoes that Inge left outside his door every night during his stay, but Jones denied it. He did reveal, however, that they wandered around the maze of corridors in the Bellevue for some time searching for their hats and coats before Inge smiled and drily suggested, 'Don't you think we had better get a non-mystical person to guide us?'⁶⁵ Finally, in spite of being frustrated by Underhill's lack of appreciation for Quakerism, he referred to her as a 'great soul'.⁶⁶

There are a number of extant letters from Underhill (often effusive, in scrawling hand-writing) and Inge (quite formal, in neat and precise penmanship) to Jones in the Haverford archives. The one from Underhill reproduced in Appendix C worries that she might have offended Jones by her comments in *Mysticism* about their

⁶³ Peabody, 'Mysticism and modern life', 470.

⁶⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 205.

⁶⁵ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 207.

⁶⁶ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 257.

disagreement over St Francis' stigmata.

In summary, Jones was one of a group of Christian scholars who wrote on mysticism. Naturally, there were differences of opinion, and Jones recognized that he, Underhill and von Hügel represented 'three different types of religious thought'.⁶⁷ It is clear, however, that he held his fellow writers in affectionate regard.

8.3 Jones' understanding of mysticism

As noted above, mysticism is a notoriously woolly term: Jones once commented that at the end of any lecture on the subject someone would be sure to rise and ask 'Will the speaker kindly tell us in two or three plain words what mysticism really is?'⁶⁸ Added to this general vagueness, Punshon concludes that it is a mistake to look for a precise definition of mysticism from Jones, because his understanding 'was alive and growing and not really the sort of subject suitable for abstract formulae'.⁶⁹ While this is true, it is also the case that Jones' discussion of mysticism pervades his corpus, so there is plenty of material to draw on to ascertain his views. In lieu of a definition, this section first presents some characteristics of Jones' understanding of mysticism, and then considers what I take to be his distinctive contributions: his use of the terms affirmation and negation mysticism, and his insistence that mysticism flourishes best in a group.

8.3.1 Ten characteristics of mysticism

The following ten characteristics of mysticism are apparent in *Social Law*, but I refer to Jones' wider corpus to clarify and expand them. It will emerge that the way he characterizes and describes mysticism across his corpus is fairly constant, with the

⁶⁷ Jones, 'Jewish mysticism', 155.

⁶⁸ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 251.

⁶⁹ Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 227.

exception of his views on to what extent mysticism is universal.

(1) *Mysticism is an experience of God.* In *Social Law*, a mystic is someone who ‘feels his relationship to the Infinite’.⁷⁰ This aspect of Jones’ treatment of mysticism never wavers. In *Studies in Mystical Religion*, mysticism is ‘the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence’.⁷¹ In ‘Jewish Mysticism’, the ‘fundamental fact of first-hand mystical experience’ is ‘the direct encounter with the living revealing God in the depths of the soul’.⁷²

(2) *Mystical experience is one of personal relationship.* In *Social Law*, a mystic is someone who has ‘found the living God’.⁷³ This living God is deeply personal, as we saw in Chapter 4. In *Testimony*, Jones is surely drawing on his own experience when he says that God is ‘a warm and intimate Person whose reality makes our hearts tingle’.⁷⁴ We have an inner witness, he says, that ‘recognizes the divine guest and answers back with the joyous cry of *Abba*’.⁷⁵ In *New Studies*, this relationship is put in the context of prayer, during which sometimes ‘there comes a remarkable sense of answer and response’.⁷⁶ It is illustrated in *Spiritual Reformers* by a quotation from the early Quaker Isaac Pennington: ‘This is He, this is He. There is no other: This is He whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood.’⁷⁷ And in *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, mystical religion is described as the type of religion ‘through which the soul finds itself in a love-relation with the Living God’.⁷⁸

Occasionally Jones does use less personal language. In *The Inner Life*, he describes the central aspect of mystical experience as ‘the fusion of the self into a larger undifferentiated whole’ such that the ‘usual dualistic character of consciousness is

⁷⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 142.

⁷¹ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xv.

⁷² Jones, ‘Jewish mysticism’, 156.

⁷³ Jones, *Social Law*, 155.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Testimony*, 122.

⁷⁵ Jones, *Testimony*, 159.

⁷⁶ Jones, *New Studies*, 44.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, xix.

⁷⁸ Jones, Introduction to *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, in *Quakerism, A Spiritual Movement*, 128.

transcended'.⁷⁹ It is possible that expressions such as this resulted in misunderstandings. Wilmot Metcalf seems to have questioned Jones on this point in a letter referring to one of Jones' talks he had attended. Jones' reply attempts to set the record straight:

The one point that I made which seemed a mistake to you was in reference to what was in my mind in moments of worship. As I had been pointing out all through my talk, I feel that there are states of life when one stops thinking and in those highest moments of worship I never have a content of thought and I only meant to say that in such moments I did not think of God as personal, I simply felt the covering of a great Presence that surrounded and invaded me, and no thought beyond that was present. But the moment I interpret my religious life and my religious experience I always interpret it in terms of a personal God.⁸⁰

There seems to be little doubt, then, that, in spite of Jones' occasional reference to shifts in consciousness, he viewed the relationship with God as a personal one. It should also be noted that Jones' wider emphasis on divine guidance and transformation make most sense if they are understood in terms of a personal relationship with God.⁸¹

(3) *Mystical experiences are universal.* As we have seen, the fact that the 'shekinah of the soul' is in the subconscious suggests that mystical experience should be universal. Jones seems to want to claim this universality, but, as noted in the last chapter, he wavers at times. In *Testimony*, universality is implicitly implied: 'mutual fellowship with God is as truly a normal trait of human life as breathing is'. And in *Studies in Mystical Religion*, mystical experiences are 'not foreign to our true nature as men'.⁸² At other times, he acknowledges that mystical experiences are dependent on 'the peculiar psychic structure of [the] inner self'.⁸³ As also noted in the last chapter, Jones does offer some explanations in passing for this lack of

⁷⁹ Jones, *Inner Life*, 185.

⁸⁰ To Wilmot Metcalf, 24 February 1931, HC Box 56.

⁸¹ Although see Rowlands (ed.) *God, Words and Us*, Chapter 3, for discussions about how today's non-theist Quakers maintain faith in the Quaker business method when there is no 'God' to guide.

⁸² Jones, *Testimony*, 21; Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xxv.

⁸³ Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, xxiii.

universality. A further explanation concerns differing expectations over what experiences count as 'mystical', as discussed in the next point.

(4) *Mystical experiences can vary in intensity.* In *Social Law*, Jones acknowledges that the intensity of mystical experiences varies among individuals, writing that mystical experience is probably present to 'some degree' in everyone.⁸⁴ In *Spiritual Energies*, the reader is assured that 'the calmer, more meditative, less emotional, less ecstatic experiences of God are not less convincing and possess greater constructive value for life and character than do ecstatic experiences'.⁸⁵ Indeed, the experience may be so ordinary that an individual does not recognize it as mystical: in *New Studies*, Jones writes of 'the powerful testimony of inward peace which many a soul knows, even though no special claim of mystical experience is made'.⁸⁶ It is possible that Jones had William Littleboy in mind here, who, recall from the last chapter, experienced a sense of peace but claimed not to have had a mystical experience.

(5) *Mystical experiences are associated with transformation.* Jones is absolutely clear that mystical experiences should be associated with the transformation of the individual. In *Social Law*, he stresses that progress towards union with God 'is to be known by the increased enrichment of all the powers of our personality'.⁸⁷ Likewise, in *Testimony*, 'The highest traits of character we know in God are love, gentleness, tenderness and self-giving grace. Where the meeting of the soul with God brings forth such fruits in the life of a person as those, we may well believe the evidence.'⁸⁸ Furthermore, mystical experiences can lead to the transformation of society: the 'great mystics come back from their high moments with an imperative

⁸⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 141.

⁸⁵ R.M. Jones, *Spiritual Energies in Daily Life* (Memphis: General Books, [1922] 2012), 15.

⁸⁶ Jones, *New Studies*, 46.

⁸⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 155.

⁸⁸ Jones, *Testimony*, 160.

sense of mission in the world', and even ordinary people who practice the presence of God find that 'visions of service open before them'.⁸⁹

(6) *Mystical experiences are ordinary.* This association of mysticism with societal transformation suggests that mystical experiences will often be decidedly ordinary. In *Social Law*, Jones emphasizes that the mystic is contributing his human powers to the 'divine Spirit' in 'normal daily life',⁹⁰ and thus mystics 'have quiet strength supplied for tasks that ought to be done'.⁹¹ He identifies two problems in identifying mysticism with abnormal experiences such as visions, auditions and ecstasy. The first is that the mystics who had these experiences had a 'peculiar psychical frame and disposition'.⁹² In fact, in some cases abnormal experiences are cultivated through ascetic practices that produce 'abnormal persons' and 'hysterical constitutions'.⁹³ The second is that mysticism's association with 'occult lore or abnormal phenomena' brings the term into disrepute.⁹⁴ He regrets that some saint of 'quiet order' did not invent 'a winged word to name this co-relationship of the soul with God'.⁹⁵

(7) *Mysticism requires care and attention to flourish but no special techniques.* In *Social Law*, Jones suggests that social action makes an awareness of God (i.e. a mystical experience) more likely: 'The simplest act of duty is good because it makes the Infinite God more real'.⁹⁶ He does not, however, discuss how spiritual practices might foster this awareness, other than in relation to a Quaker meeting (see the next point). In *New Studies*, Jones says that the mystic is 'a person who has cultivated, with more strenuous care and discipline than others have done, the native homing passion of the soul for the Beyond',⁹⁷ but cautioned that 'routine cut-

⁸⁹ Jones, *Testimony*, 25; Jones, *New Studies*, 45.

⁹⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 154.

⁹¹ Jones, *New Studies*, 45.

⁹² Jones, *Spiritual Energies*, 15.

⁹³ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xxviii.

⁹⁴ Jones, *Testimony*, 200.

⁹⁵ Jones, *Testimony*, 210.

⁹⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 154.

⁹⁷ Jones, *New Studies*, 15.

and-dried' systems of discipline of the type that forge a mystic like St John of the Cross are 'too remote from life to be satisfactory ways into the heart of divine reality'.⁹⁸ What is important are 'times of hush and meditation' and 'appreciation of *beauty*, learning how to sound the deeps of *love*, formation of purity, gentleness, tenderness of heart'.⁹⁹ In addition, it is essential to have the 'fellowship and influence of spiritually contagious persons who, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, unconsciously transmit that Life'.¹⁰⁰ I return to this point in Chapter 10.

(8) *Mysticism flourishes best in a group.* In *Social Law*, Jones discusses the importance of the corporate aspect of mysticism in some detail – this emphasis reflects Jones' distinctively Quaker contribution to the conversation and will be discussed further in Section 8.3.3 below. He surmised that 'There is some subtle telepathy that comes into play in the living silence of a congregation which makes every earnest seeker more quick to feel the presence of God, more acute of inner ear, more tender of heart to feel the bubbling of the springs of life than any one of them would be in isolation.'¹⁰¹ Furthermore, because religion and morality are 'the consummate gains of the travail of the ages', nobody 'can cut loose from the spiritual group-life in which he is rooted without entailing serious loss'.¹⁰² In other words, the group is necessary both to facilitate experience of God and to provide a moral and spiritual framework for that experience.

(9) *Mystical experiences are culturally mediated.* The fact that God can be experienced in all religions suggests for Jones that these experiences of God will be culturally mediated.¹⁰³ He does not say this specifically in *Social Law*, but it is congruent with his comments about conscience (Chapter 5), which has a cultural component in addition to a divine 'depth'. It is also congruent with his definition of

⁹⁸ Jones, *Testimony*, 29.

⁹⁹ Jones, *Testimony*, 22 and 29.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, *Testimony*, 30.

¹⁰¹ Jones, *Inner Life*, 104.

¹⁰² Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xxxiv–xxxv.

¹⁰³ See Marshall, *Mystical Encounters*, 179

the Inner Light as being divine and human, in that we might expect the divine element to be expressed in a way that is particular to each individual. He is more explicit about this point in *Studies in Mystical Religion*, claiming that ‘the symbolism through which these inward experiences are expressed ... all bear the mark and colour of their particular age’.¹⁰⁴

(10) *Mystical insights need to be tested*: Jones recognizes that *in practice* it cannot be assumed that what comes from the subconscious is divinely given. In *Social Law*, he devotes a chapter to how divine guidance can be tested within a Quaker meeting (discussed in Section 8.3.3). In *Spiritual Reformers*, he expresses this need to test intuitions in terms of the other elements of religion, namely reason and history: the mystical element may keep religion alive and vital, but its insights need to be supplemented with ‘the steady and unwavering testimony of Reason, and no less with the immense objective illumination of History’.¹⁰⁵

To summarize, Jones viewed mysticism as a conscious experience of communion with a personal God. This experience could vary in intensity but only rarely involved ecstasy or trances, these often being the result of ascetic practices. The individual mystic is transformed, coming to reflect the character of God, and is inspired and strengthened to do good and transform their community. Mysticism requires care and attention to flourish, but no special techniques (contra Underhill), and its intuitions need to be tested by reason and historical revelation (as per von Hügel). For Jones, it was exemplified by John Woolman (who would not himself have used mystical terminology): ‘Here was a mysticism – and it was the type to which I dedicated my life – which sought no ecstasies, no miracles of levitation, no startling phenomena, no private raptures, but whose over-mastering passion was to turn all he possessed, including his own life, “into the channel of universal love”’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, xxxiii–xxxiv.

¹⁰⁵ Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, xxix.

¹⁰⁶ Jones, *Middle Years*, 201.

One of Jones' contributions to the study of mysticism was to differentiate between negation mystics, who aimed at an experience of ecstasy, and affirmation mystics, who aimed to transform the world based on an encounter with God, and it is to these characterizations that we now turn.

8.3.2 Negation and affirmation mysticism

Mysticism for Jones, as we have seen, involves an experience of God, but this experience can be characterized by two distinct goals and attitudes.¹⁰⁷ A negation mystic is, according to Jones, someone whose goal is to become absorbed in God. This type of mystic holds that God cannot be found in objects, or events in history, or states of consciousness, because these are all finite. They thus aim to transcend the finite, even their own 'self'. As an example, Jones cites Eckhart, whose goal was to experience states of consciousness that approach a blank.¹⁰⁸

Jones has two objections to this type of mysticism. The first is Eckhart's mistaken belief that whatever comes from beyond consciousness must necessarily come from God.¹⁰⁹ The second is that it encourages individuals to live for a rare moment of ecstasy and 'to sacrifice the chance of winning spiritual victory for the hope of receiving an ineffable illumination which would quench all further search or desire'.¹¹⁰ In other words, Jones seemed to view this approach as selfish and self-indulgent because its goal is an overwhelming personal experience rather than spiritual victory, which, we can deduce from Jones' comments elsewhere, would involve overcoming sin and serving others by doing good deeds. In that sense, negation mysticism did not reflect his view of God as love, nor his conviction that humans are part of a social group.

¹⁰⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 148.

¹⁰⁸ Jones, *Social Law*, 151.

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 151. This criticism is of interest because it could also be made of Jones' own views. As suggested in Chapter 5, Jones viewed God as underlying consciousness and does not really have a satisfactory *theoretical* explanation of how consciousness can coexist with what is 'not of God' in an individual, although he acknowledges the discrepancy in practice.

¹¹⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 152.

Affirmation mystics also seek an immediate, first-hand sense of God, but, in contrast to negation mystics, as a prelude to action and not as an end in itself: 'More important than vision is obedience to the vision.'¹¹¹ It is a mysticism of everyday life in the sense that God is found not by negating the finite but *in* the finite.¹¹² In fact, all human tasks can become 'glorious' because God is in them.¹¹³ The goal is 'to become one with God in a conscious union'.¹¹⁴ The implication here is that this is not a passive union, but rather one that involves transformation of will and character such that 'Instead of losing our will we approach that true freedom where we *will* to do His will.'¹¹⁵ Note that this aim is an expression of one of Jones' recurring themes, namely the concept of Clement's 'harmonized man'.

The key point, then, is that, in line with Jones' universalism, both negation and affirmation mysticism involve an experience of God. His distinction between affirmation and negation mysticism rests on attitude and practice, namely what the mystic does based on their experience. In this sense, his terminology is subtly different from that of pseudo-Dionysius, because for Jones everyone can have an experiential relationship with God, not just those who follow the *via negativa*.

Furthermore, the boundaries between negation mysticism (or the *via negativa*) and affirmation mysticism are blurred in practice: 'The great mystics have always saved themselves by neglecting to be consistent with this rigorous negation and abstraction. In their practice they have cut through their theory and gone on living the rich concrete life.'¹¹⁶ Jones' letter to Wilmot Metcalf quoted in Section 8.3.1 exemplifies this blurred boundary, in that Jones' experience of the absence of thinking corresponds most closely to one associated with *via negativa*, although he undoubtedly classed himself as an affirmation mystic. One possible resolution to

¹¹¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 153.

¹¹² Jones, *Social Law*, 154.

¹¹³ Jones, *Social Law*, 154.

¹¹⁴ Jones, *Social Law*, 155.

¹¹⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 155.

¹¹⁶ Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, xxvii.

this paradox may lie in the fact that Jones does not appear to consider that practices aimed at enabling communion with God beyond words or knowledge (for example silent prayer), and therefore associated with negation mysticism, could in and of themselves produce transformation such that a practitioner became more compassionate and as a result lived the 'rich concrete life' associated with affirmation mysticism. I consider this issue further in Chapter 10. The fact that Jones' categories of affirmation and negation mysticism are in practice not distinct may be one reason why these terms do not seem to have been taken up by other scholars of mysticism.¹¹⁷

Note that Jones' obvious preference for affirmation mysticism is in line with the Social Gospel movement and the traditional Quaker emphasis on social action. These calls to action that may come through an experience of God need, however, to be tested. And this is an area where the importance of the group becomes apparent.

8.3.3 Group mysticism and guidance

Quaker practice has always revolved around times of silence, in which the communal aspect is paramount and, among other things, contributes to the discernment process. As John Punshon puts it in *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 'People who regard Friends' meetings as opportunities for meditation have failed to appreciate this corporate aspect. The waiting and listening are activities in which everybody is engaged and produce spoken ministry which helps to articulate the common guidance which the Holy Spirit is believed to give the group as a whole.'¹¹⁸

Meetings in which the group as a whole is particularly aware of God's presence and in which God seems to be speaking clearly are said to be 'gathered'. The exposition

¹¹⁷ Rock, for example, points out that Jones' affirmation mysticism is ignored outside Quakerism, although he suggests that this is because Jones' mysticism is so different from the traditional understanding (Rock, 'Rufus Jones never did establish', 52).

¹¹⁸ *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 2.37

par excellence of this phenomenon, and one which brings the mystical dimension to the fore, is given by Thomas Kelly, a friend and colleague of Jones at Haverford. In a short essay entitled 'The Gathered Meeting', he writes that 'In the practice of group worship on the basis of silence come special times when the electric hush and solemnity and depth of power steals over the worshipers ... we stand together on holy ground.'¹¹⁹ The meeting may be silent, or may be characterized by several individuals speaking, drawing out a theme, but in such a way that vocal contributions enhance the spiritual atmosphere rather than merely breaking the silence: the silence and words are of 'one texture, one piece'.¹²⁰ Kelly describes these occasions using James' four characteristics of mystic states: they are ineffable (they need to be experienced and cannot be described), noetic (they appear to give insights beyond the intellect), transient (they rarely last longer than half an hour) and passive (although a mystical experience may be facilitated by focusing the attention, for example, once in the mystic state an individual will feel 'as if his own will were in abeyance').¹²¹

As we saw in point (8) in Section 8.3.1, Jones believed that communal worship helped each individual to experience God. He also believed that the group had an essential role in relation to the clarity it brought regarding guidance. Just as an 'ordinary painter' needs to exhibit his work so that others can discern whether or not it is great, he explains, an 'ordinary man' must test his leading by the spiritual life in other men.¹²² Thus, I suggest, a gathered Quaker meeting can be seen as a corporate expression of affirmation mysticism in that it involves an experience of God that leads to action.

But just how do Quakers discern if the guidance that seems to come from God is genuinely of divine origin? Jones does not set out his views systematically, but

¹¹⁹ T. Kelly, *The Eternal Promise* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2006), 43.

¹²⁰ Kelly, *The Eternal Promise*, 53.

¹²¹ James, *Varieties*, 380–381.

¹²² Jones, *Social Law*, 187.

interestingly the criteria he proposes in passing are all found in Davis' *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience*, the book considered in the previous chapter, in a section that discusses criteria for distinguishing 'genuine' mystical experiences from 'delusive' ones in relation to an individual.¹²³ First, for example, Davis refers to *external consistency*, such that experiences are proved real to their possessor because, unlike dreams, they remain with a person 'when brought into contact with the objective realities of life'.¹²⁴ For Jones, group mystical intuitions insofar as they relate to guidance are necessarily bound up with everyday life, so meet this requirement. Second, Davis' requirement for *consistency with orthodox doctrine* is also met: Jones states that while individuals test their ideas by the revelation of the group, the group, in turn, tests their faith and spirit 'by the larger revelation which has come through prophets and apostles and saints and martyrs'.¹²⁵ Ultimately, however, guidance is to be judged, third, by the *fruits criterion*. This criterion is cited by mystics in all traditions, and involves the mystic developing a life marked by virtues such as 'wisdom, humility and goodness'.¹²⁶ Jones again applies this at the group level, asking 'Will obedience to this prompting construct not only a better person, but a better social group, a truer and a diviner fellowship?'¹²⁷ Finally, Davis points to the importance of *an evaluation of the subject's psychological and mental condition*; for example, St Teresa warned that subjects who are 'melancholy' or 'have feeble imaginations' cannot be relied on.¹²⁸ Jones applies this requirement too at the group level, observing that 'If the meeting is rent by faction or is disturbed by stubborn and self-guided members the spiritual method fails to work perfectly.'¹²⁹

¹²³ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 71–72.

¹²⁴ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 72.

¹²⁵ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 72; Jones, *Social Law*, 197.

¹²⁶ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 72 (cf. Gal 5).

¹²⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 199.

¹²⁸ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 73.

¹²⁹ Jones, *Social Law*, 195.

In summary, one unique aspect of Jones' view of mysticism is its corporate context: Quaker meetings have the potential to be a group expression of affirmation mysticism, in that they can be a communal experience of God that results in guidance for action, with this guidance being tested by criteria that are more usually applied to individuals.

Conclusion

Jones was convinced that Quakerism, which had at its heart an experience of God, was a mystical religion. He promoted this aspect of the Society, and by the 1930s mysticism was an element in the formation of many of the new meetings that emerged where he was read or heard.¹³⁰ This mystical emphasis reflected the widespread public fascination with mysticism – a fascination that originated with Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*, was fuelled by the Transcendentalists and given credence by James. Jones wrote prolifically on the subject throughout his life and engaged with the most prominent scholars of the time, many of whom he considered good friends.

Social Law provides one of the earliest accounts of Jones' views on mysticism. Neither here nor elsewhere, however, does he offer a formal definition of mysticism or set out his views systematically. With reference to the ideas in *Social Law* that are echoed in his wider corpus, I have argued that, at root, he understood it as a felt, decidedly 'normal' and 'everyday', experience of a personal God that is available to all. I have suggested that Jones made two distinctive contributions to the field. First, he differentiated between negation and affirmation mystics, with the former seeking God for the joy of the experience itself and the latter as a springboard for action. Second, he insisted that mysticism flourished best in a group: Quaker meetings enabled individuals to be aware of God's presence more

¹³⁰ Appelbaum, 'Protestant mysticism', 14.

easily than they would alone, and allowed the guidance that emerged from this encounter with God to be tested. Quaker meetings at their best, then, are for Jones an example of group affirmation mysticism.

This group affirmation mysticism is, I suggest, a historically contingent grand synthesis of many of the themes encountered in previous chapters. In Chapter 2 we saw that Jones took it for granted from childhood onwards that God could be experienced in everyday life. This conviction is at the heart of his view of mysticism. In Chapter 3 we saw that he was convinced of the importance of making faith consistent with modern thought. He thus defended his conviction that God could be experienced on the basis of the psychology of James and the idealism of Royce. In Chapter 4 we saw that he was convinced that God is characterized by love and is working through humans to build a better society. It is thus to be expected that God will guide individuals and groups in this endeavour, and this expectation is manifested in affirmation mysticism. In Chapter 5 we saw that Jones believed that conscience prompts individuals to respond to their particular social and cultural circumstances and that they are transformed to become more like God by habitually doing good deeds. We also saw that he viewed humans as social beings whose ideals and conscience are formed by society. Again, both of these beliefs are integral to affirmation mysticism: individuals transform their particular communities as a result of God's guidance and in so doing are themselves transformed; and participation in a spiritual community is essential both for enhancing awareness of God and for testing spiritual intuitions that come from this awareness. In Chapter 6 we saw that the ideals that inspire individuals and groups are those of Christ, whom Jones believed to be the ultimate revelation of the God who is guiding individuals and groups. Thus, the particular form of the action arising from affirmation mysticism is shaped by the example of Christ. Finally, in Chapter 7 we saw how these aforementioned convictions came together in Jones' formulation of the Inner Light. This formulation has practical implications for how life should be lived, and

these implications ultimately find expression through the practice of affirmation mysticism.

Note also that Jones' affirmation mysticism incorporates the Quaker emphasis on the importance of the group as an aid to a conscious encounter with God and the traditional emphasis on social action. It also incorporates liberal Christianity's emphasis on experience and the Social Gospel, and the academic and lay interest in mysticism. In other words, affirmation mysticism is an ingenious blend of Jones' own experience and aspects of modern thought, Quakerism and liberal Christianity.

It is thus clear that Jones' views on mysticism cannot be considered in isolation from his wider thought, the historical context, and his own disposition and immersion within a form of Quakerism that expected to 'have converse' with a personal God. The consequences of failing to acknowledge this will become apparent in the next chapter, which considers how Jones has been interpreted over the last century.

Chapter 9

Reactions to the ideas in *Social Law*

*Our message must be a clear utterance and an evident practice of the great verities of personal contact with the Truth, of an indwelling divinity, and of that inward life, not as a foreign or external or supernatural thing, but as an inherent and elemental part of our being.*¹ [George Newman, 1907]

*Jones created an “inner light mysticism” in which the soul was its own authority, an elevated humanism which severed the inward light from Christ.*² [Carole Spencer, 2007]

Given that *Social Law* was the first expression of Jones’ highly influential views on the Inner Light and mysticism, the history of the reception of the book and its ideas is an important part of the history of Quakerism. The story is an intriguing one: Jones’ views, I will suggest, were initially criticized by evangelical Quakers and uncritically accepted by liberals; later, they were occasionally extended or interpreted in ways he might not have agreed with, and arguably laid the groundwork for a form of Quakerism that could self-identify as pluralistic. As far as I am aware, however, it is a story that has not been told in detail.

It begins with an initial flurry of reviews in newspapers and Quaker journals, with personal letters to and from Jones, and with two early attempts (in an article and a book) to show how Jones’ thought related to key Christian doctrines. In the decades that followed, Jones, as we have seen, repeatedly returned to the theme of the Inner Light, and more recent engagement with his novel formulation thus extends

¹ Newman, ‘Divine immanence and Quakerism’, 157.

² Spencer, *Holiness*, 204.

beyond the presentation in *Social Law*. In the main, this engagement consists of passing comments in articles and books that criticize Jones and his brand of Quakerism for fostering humanism or making humans divine. Of particular interest here is a more sustained treatment by Hugh Rock on Jones' mysticism. Rock's interpretation of Jones' mysticism as a logical appreciation of ethical principles that retains language about God as a gloss stands in opposition to the reading of Jones presented in the last chapter.

This chapter will flesh out some of the main details of the story, roughly chronologically. Section 9.1 surveys the wide range of reactions that were apparent immediately following publication, as expressed in reviews in newspapers and journal articles. Section 9.2 considers letters to Jones, from Quakers and academics, again revealing a wide range of reactions. Section 9.3 then considers how two Quakers, James Bean and Edward Grubb, related Jones' ideas on the Inner Light to the Holy Spirit and the atonement shortly after the publication of *Social Law*. Section 9.4 considers more recent reaction to his ideas, in particular as they relate to attributions of humanism and to complaints that Jones made humans in some sense divine. The final section is a rebuttal of Hugh Rock's 2016 interpretation of Jones' mysticism.

9.1 Initial reception

As noted in Chapter 1, the publisher's advertisement for *Social Law* sees the purpose of the book as demonstrating that to be a person means being bound up in organic relationship with many others, and that this social relationship stretches from earth to heaven, such that 'God and man are also bound together in organic relationship'.³ The book, the advert promises, 'is full of optimism and good cheer'. Most of the Quaker reviews and letters written to Jones likewise recognized that

³ *Friends' Intelligencer*, 61 (3 December 1904), 49.

the most important point in the book was indeed this 'organic relationship' with God. Some, however, saw in this a cause not for 'good cheer' but for grave concern.

9.1.1 Newspaper and journal reviews

Jones' biographer Elizabeth Vining devotes a chapter of her book to *Social Law* and includes an overview of its reception.⁴ Outside Quakerism, Vining reports, the book was reviewed across the country. The *Boston Transcript* concluded that 'Philosophic insight and restraint combined with a rare gift of expression renders this book an interesting and valuable addition to the science of religion'. The *Los Angeles Times* was less enthusiastic, complaining that 'The book lacks the clear conviction that was Drummond's'. In London, *The Nation* had reservations about the 'dashing' American style, but concluded that 'The beautiful and winning description of the way to God by one who has trodden that way may be of untold value to many an inquirer.'

The Quaker reaction was wide-ranging. Conservative Quakers in Philadelphia opposed the book to the extent that it was banned from their library.⁵ The notable lack of a review of it in their journal, *The Friend*,⁶ means that their objections remain unknown, but it seems likely that they would have objected to Jones' theorizing and to his emphasis on the human aspect of the Inner Light: Jones recalled being reprimanded by one Conservative Quaker, who told him, 'Rufus, thee thinks too much!'⁷ The 'liberal' Hicksite journal *The Friends' Intelligencer*, by contrast, published a fairly lengthy review by Henry Haviland. The review was mostly a summary with no critical analysis, but it praised *Social Law* as a 'logical, limpid and convincing book'.⁸ Haviland recognized the centrality of the formulation of the Inner Light, rounding off his review with the observation that the book's whole message

⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 110.

⁵ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 109.

⁶ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 108; see also Appendix A.

⁷ Cooper, 'Reflections', 26.

⁸ H.M. Haviland, 'Social Law in the Spiritual World', *Friends' Intelligencer*, 61 (1904): 786.

can be summed up in the final phrase 'God living through men, and men living in God'.⁹

In Britain, *The [London] Friend* started off its review by proclaiming that Jones had 'struck oil' in the title, but went on to deliver a cutting assessment that recognized the importance of the subject matter but criticized its analysis: 'His exposition of this aspect of modern thought is worthy of most careful elaboration. The world awaits a competent expounder of the theme.'¹⁰ The reviewer recognized the potential controversy in Jones' understanding of the Inner Light, pointing out that 'In discussing "The Inner Light" on pages 174–5 Rufus Jones throws himself open to question', but offered neither a critique of the new view nor a defence of the traditional one.

A few years post-publication, in 1907, George Newman wrote an article in the *Friends Quarterly Examiner* about Jones' view of the Inner Light.¹¹ It left no room for ambiguity about Jones' views: 'Early Friends', Newman wrote, 'thought of the Inward Light as "a principle of God's nature *but not of man's nature*" as Isaac Pennington put it. Now it seems to us that Rufus Jones ... made clear, once and for all, the conception that "the Inner Light, the true seed, is no foreign substance added to an undivine human life".'¹² This, for Newman, had implications for theology and for everyday life: he enthused that Jones' emphasis on divine immanence was in line with the 'new theology', and reminded Quakers that the inward life could only be revealed in service for others.¹³ Acknowledging the difference between British and American Quakers, he expressed the hope that,

⁹ Haviland, 'Social Law', 787.

¹⁰ *The Friend* (London), 'Social Law in the Spiritual Word' (16th December 1904): 829.

¹¹ Newman, 'Divine immanence and Quakerism', 155. The article Newman refers to is Jones, 'The divine presence in human life'.

¹² Newman, 'Divine immanence and Quakerism', 155.

¹³ Newman, 'Divine immanence and Quakerism', 157.

whatever the effect on American Quakers, Jones' reformulation would stimulate British Quakers and rouse them to their calling.¹⁴

Jones was clearly disappointed by the initial sluggish and negative response to *Social Law*. He wrote to John Wilhelm Rowntree in December 1904 that 'I am considerably tried over the awkward notice of my book in The London Friend. It could hardly have been worse. I should have welcomed a criticism that showed insight. But to praise the title and to say that it is a good subject for somebody else to work up is pretty bad!'¹⁵ Newman's 1907 article elicited a more upbeat response though: in a letter that revealed his earlier disappointment, Jones admitted that 'I was beginning to wonder whether there was any use trying to bring any larger points of view to the notice of Friends. All my attempts seemed to fall so flat that I questioned whether I was not wasting my time and ink!' ¹⁶ He continues that his 1907 article 'Divine presence' (see Chapter 7) was receiving 'a slender, nagging sort of comment' which quite depressed him but that he was pleased that Newman had recognized the importance and far-reaching implications of this new formulation of the Inner Light: 'Thy study of it was the first word I had had which indicated an appreciation of its significance.'

In summary, these initial reviews (or conspicuous lack thereof in the case of *The Friend*) provide an informative first glimpse of how the reception of Jones' view of the Inner Light would unfold. Regarding its novel formulation, pre-existing fractures within Quakerism meant that it received mixed reactions. The more 'liberal' American Hicksites and British Quakers embraced it, whereas Conservative Quakers rejected it. Regarding scope, the Inner Light was seen to relate to 'new theology' and to action in everyday life. Regarding its exposition, some saw it as 'logical' and 'convincing', whereas for others it 'lacked conviction' or required a more competent

¹⁴ Newman, 'Divine immanence and Quakerism', 156.

¹⁵ To John Wilhelm Rowntree, 5 December 1904, HC Box 48 [see Appendix B].

¹⁶ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 109–110.

analysis. Clearly, then, much was at stake regarding a far-reaching, controversial idea that was set out in *Social Law* with questionable clarity. These factors perhaps make it all the more surprising that, as we will now see, there was not more critical engagement with its ideas.

9.1.2 The process of acceptance

In his reflection on Jones' legacy, Cooper makes the observation that Jones' views on Quaker mysticism were to be accepted rather than argued about.¹⁷ This attitude is certainly apparent in Newman's article above, which seems to be advocating an uncritical response to Jones' view of the Inner Light: for Newman it is more important to live out the implications of Jones' views than to engage in debate about them.

A number of reasons for this uncritical acceptance can be proposed. First, perhaps the general Quaker tendency to focus on praxis rather than theology meant that there were simply no other Quakers who were either willing or capable of offering a sustained critique or an alternative 'liberal' formulation. Second, the high regard in which William James was held may well have conferred authority on Jones' view. Finally, in later years Jones himself had achieved considerable stature within Quakerism. Cooper recalls that his criticisms of Jones in a 1963 conference to mark the centenary of his birth caused a stir, with most Friends feeling that 'any critical considerations were out of order'.¹⁸

A few comments in letters to Jones suggest that his views gained ground almost by osmosis. Rowntree, for example, wrote to encourage Jones, assuring him that 'Your book has taken great hold',¹⁹ and Gertrude Ellis, who had attended lectures by Jones at Woodbrooke on material that would form the basis of *Social Law*, wrote to

¹⁷ Cooper, 'Reflections', 28.

¹⁸ Cooper, 'Reflections', 35.

¹⁹ John Wilhelm Rowntree, 15 February 1905, quoted in Vining, *Friend of Life*, 109.

Jones that the 'gift' he had given was 'a growing possession to the receivers'.²⁰ George Newman offers some explanation for why this acceptance was a slow process in a letter to Jones. It was, he thought, partly because readers did not understand the message and partly because they did not dare to trust it. 'The dualism is still strong in English Christianity', he continues, 'but it is going!'²¹ The gradual shift away from dualism would undoubtedly make Jones' views more acceptable, but the phrase about not daring to trust perhaps hints that emotional as well as intellectual factors were at play. In spite of the broadly positive view of human nature held by Quakers, for example, readers may have worried that seeing themselves as inherently related to God was a step too far.

This broad variety of opinions is reflected in the letters Jones received.

9.2 Personal letters

Jones received letters about *Social Law* from a variety of correspondents, including Quakers, followers of 'New Thought' and psychologists. As we will see, their letters are on the whole positive, with the ones from psychologists offering more in the way of a brief critical engagement with Jones' use of psychology.

9.2.1 Letters from Quakers

The letters from Quakers illustrate the different attitudes to modern thought and certain elements of Christian doctrine within the Society. The British liberal Quaker Joan Fry (1905), for example, was delighted with Jones' engagement with modern thought, enthusing that he had put the Quaker views 'quite plainly in the direct line of what one may call philosophical development' and expressing her gratitude that he showed how 'much that was merely instinctive, is really verified by the slower

²⁰ Gertrude Ellis, 19 December 1903, HC Box 7.

²¹ George Newman, 15 July 1907, HC Box 10 [Note that the word I have interpreted as 'dualism' is difficult to read, so this point should be treated with caution; see Appendix C].

methods of science'. She also praised Jones for making Quaker thought more widely known, reflecting that 'We are often so imbued with an almost false humility, that we are afraid to set forth our views in the high place which we ourselves feel convinced that they hold.'²²

As noted in Chapter 5, however, Henry Newman, a prominent British Quaker who supported modernism, questioned Jones' implicit assumption that all souls would be saved, pointing out that this contradicted Scriptural teaching that 'immortality is only in God, only in Christ'.²³

We see here then that the strength and weakness of Jones' approach as judged by these two Quakers are two sides of the same coin. For Fry, Jones' strength was that his new formulation of the Inner Light was in line with the latest developments in philosophy and psychology. For Newman, although he might not have recognized the root cause, Jones' use of psychology meant that the human–divine relationship was inevitably universal and therefore contradicted evangelical understandings of 'Scriptural teaching'. Newman's mind would certainly not have been put at rest if he had read the next two letters considered, from men perhaps best described as being on the fringes of the core of conviction.

9.2.2 Letters from 'the fringes'

As noted in Chapter 3, the 'New Thought' movement was popular in New England at the turn of the 19th century. Proponents emphasized the immanence of God, the availability of God's power and the divine nature of humans. David Scull was a Quaker,²⁴ but his letter reveals that he also clearly supported New Thought and was proud of his acquaintance with two of the movement's founders, Henry Wood and

²² Joan Fry, 13 February 1905, HC Box 9.

²³ As discussed by Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 182, some Quakers were both modernists and evangelical.

²⁴ Scull was a manager at Haverford. Vining describes him as 'a saintly character' (Vining, *Friend of Life*, 64).

Horatio Dresser.²⁵ He declares that Jones' exposition of the relation of the individual ego to the Over Soul (Emerson's expression that had so captivated Jones as a student; see Chapter 2) was 'essentially one' with the main features of New Thought, and notes with evident enthusiasm that *Social Law* was 'permeated with the idea of the essential divinity of man'.²⁶ So enthusiastic was he, in fact, that he offered to send Wood and Dresser copies of *Social Law* at his own expense. When James addresses New Thought in *Varieties*, however, he concludes that, although Wood and Dresser use Christian terminology, their view diverges from that of 'ordinary Christians' and their idea of man's higher nature is 'decidedly pantheistic'.²⁷ Given that Jones wanted to avoid pantheism, Scull's endorsement may have given him pause for thought.

Along similar lines to Scull, George Hohnan wrote to Jones on paper headed with the affiliation 'New Church Evidence Society', a society dedicated to spreading the teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg.²⁸ Swedenborg (1688–1772) was a Swedish scientist and engineer who began to experience dreams and visions in his fifties in which he conversed with angels and spirits and took tours of heaven and hell; he saw heaven as open to all who loved God and acted benevolently and was resolutely anti-Calvinistic. 'After reading your interesting book *Social Law* in the Spiritual World, I venture to ask whether you are at all acquainted with the works of Emanuel Swedenborg', Hohnan starts, before surmising that Swedenborg's thought on 'the structure of the human mind, the organic communion of all humanity and the immanence of God in creation' could not fail to appeal to Jones, and offering to send him a copy of 'Swedenborg's Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Love and Wisdom'.

²⁵ For a series of articles on New Thought, see H.W. Dresser (ed.), *The Spirit of the New Thought* (London: George G. Harrap, 1917).

²⁶ David Scull, 24 December 1904, HC Box 8.

²⁷ James, *Varieties*, 100.

²⁸ George Hohnan, 29 August 1907, HC Box 10.

Swedenborg was held in high esteem by Henry James, who passed some of his enthusiasm on to his son William, and by Emerson, who described him as the 'largest of all modern souls'.²⁹ Given Jones' dependence on Emerson and James, it is perhaps not surprising that Hohnan saw these points of similarity. Again, however, although Swedenborg had a Christian framework for his thought – Emerson in fact criticized him for remaining subservient to the Bible and Christian symbolism – his views were hardly mainstream.³⁰ Although he was initially classed as a 'mystic' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* he was soon reassigned as a 'Spiritualist'.³¹ We have in these two letters, then, an early indication that readers were entirely capable of taking Jones' thought in directions that he might not have anticipated or intended.

9.2.3 Letters from academics

Francis Peabody, the Harvard exponent of the Social Gospel, also saw the wider implications of *Social Law*. He wrote to Jones that 'The main thesis for which you contend, of the "conjuncture" of the lesser life and the larger, and the "implications involved in normal consciousness", seems to me to state the foundation of any national religion or social hope.'³² Peabody is thus marginalizing the Christian aspect of the Inner Light by associating it with religion in general, and emphasizing its social implications. His comments are thus consistent with a pluralistic and potentially humanistic understanding of Quakerism.

Two other academics offered critical considerations. Thomas Harvey Haines was a psychiatrist and psychologist at Ohio State University, and sceptical about psychic phenomena (see Chapter 3). He advised Jones that 'Personally, I should have been more cautious in my use of telepathy, or reference to it than thee on p. 189. It is a pity that the psychic researchers are in such ill repute. Thee handles the sub-

²⁹ Schmidt, *Restless Souls*, 45.

³⁰ Schmidt, *Restless Souls*, 46.

³¹ Schmidt, 'Making of modern "mysticism"', 283.

³² Francis Peabody, 12 December 1904, HC Box 8.

conscious very well, in leaving that subject as much in isolation as it is. It is a question whether it is an intricately valuable part of the work.’³³ Haines’ comment about leaving ‘that subject’ alone is slightly ambiguous, but presumably he means ‘telepathy’ rather than ‘the subconscious’. This reading would mean that Jones’ formulation of the Inner Light based on the subconscious as the shekinah of the soul would still hold for Haines, which would not be the case if he was referring to the subconscious, and it is in line with my assessment in Chapter 5 that Jones included more examples of unusual phenomena than were necessary when discussing the subconscious.

Finally, there is the letter from George Coe considered in Chapter 5. Coe taught the psychology of religion at Northwestern University, Illinois, and, as noted, was troubled by the authority Jones gave to the subconscious, worrying that ‘At one point you seem to hold that there may be a shekinah of divine revelation within the subconscious; at another you seem to test this subconscious revelation by the fully conscious experience.’³⁴ Coe is thus a rare example of someone who criticized Jones’ views from a psychological rather than a Scriptural standpoint, although even he seems to be questioning a point of detail rather than Jones’ fundamental assumption that God is found in the subconscious.

In summary, the initial flurry of letters regarding *Social Law* suggests that the formulation of the Inner Light therein was open to multiple interpretations and evoked a variety of reactions. Some readers enthusiastically embraced an interpretation that suggested that humans could be considered divine, some rejected such an audacious idea, and some were cautious, wanting clarification on some points, or, perhaps, simply time to adjust. Furthermore, Jones’ new formulation was based on psychology, and it is notable first that there seems to have been no criticism of this as a strategy and second that engagement with the

³³ Thomas Harvey Haines, 6 January 1905, HC Box 9.

³⁴ George Coe, 7 April 1905, HC Box 9.

details came from academic psychologists: Haines cautioned Jones about his treatment of telepathy, and Coe questioned the logic of Jones' view that revelation came from the subconscious but needed to be tested.

Of particular interest here is that the letters from Scull, Hohnan and Peabody suggest that Jones' ideas were compatible with a religion that was not necessarily in line with the core of conviction. The next section thus explores efforts to relate Jones' views to Christianity.

9.3 Quaker engagement with the Inner Light in relation to Christian doctrine

Edward Grubb and James Bean endeavoured to tie Jones' formulation of the Inner Light to the specifically Christian concepts of the atonement and the Holy Spirit. Here I first consider Grubb's book *Authority and the Light Within*, which was referred to briefly in Chapter 7. I then consider Bean's short review of *Social Law* in *Friends' Intelligencer*.

9.3.1 Edward Grubb

Edward Grubb (1854–1939) was an English school teacher, editor of the *British Friend*, and a friend of Jones. Grubb's study of philosophy had led him to lose his evangelical faith – he recalls sitting in a back seat in the Yearly Meeting of 1880 in tears, feeling himself to be utterly alone and unable to believe one word of the ministry that was being offered – and he subsequently became committed to the liberal agenda.³⁵ His book *Authority and the Light Within* (1908) acknowledges Jones and *Social Law* as providing the first steps towards a reformulation of the message of the early Quakers in regard to the Inner Light. It is likewise aimed at the general public rather than academics, but it extends and clarifies Jones' thought in a logical

³⁵ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 49.

and lucid manner.³⁶ The first part has chapters that criticize traditional Christian sources of authority (the Church, Bible, Christ); the second part expounds the Quaker understanding of the Inner Light (historical and the then present-day); and the final part deals with the relationship of the Light Within (Grubb's nomenclature for Jones' Inner Light) to reason, conscience, atonement and the Holy Spirit. Grubb is in agreement with Jones' assessment of Barclay. The discovery of the early Quakers, he explains, was 'that *there is something of God in every person* – a little piece, as it were, of the Infinite'.³⁷ However, Quakers failed to express the idea adequately because of the weaknesses of Barclay's *Apology*, which was cast in terms of 17th century dualism and took for granted the Fall and that man was absolutely lost and ruined.³⁸

Grubb's chapter 'The Light Within and atonement' acknowledges at the outset that 'One of the oldest objections to the teaching of the Light Within is that it seems to make the Atonement needless.'³⁹ He refers to Jones' *Double Search* to counter this objection. Drawing on Jones' assertion that God is reaching across the chasm through Christ, Grubb concludes that, far from there being any conflict between the Light Within and the atonement, they are complementary: '*It is as we are reconciled to God, as He takes possession of us, that our spiritual eyes are opened to behold clearly that of which before we were but dimly conscious.*'⁴⁰ He goes on to illustrate this process from John's prologue, explaining that the Logos has always been with man as 'the Light that lighteth every man', but that when the Word became flesh, those who have been 'truly "hearing and learning" from the Father come gladly to this clearer Light'.⁴¹ In other words, the Light Within, which exists in every individual, enables an individual to recognize the clearer Light that is Christ. Thus,

³⁶ E. Grubb, *Authority and the Light Within* (London: James Clarke, 1908).

³⁷ Grubb, *Authority*, 76 (italics as in original).

³⁸ Grubb, *Authority*, 80.

³⁹ Grubb, *Authority*, 112.

⁴⁰ Grubb, *Authority*, 116 (italics as in original).

⁴¹ Grubb, *Authority*, 116, 117.

the atonement is interpreted from an exemplarist point of view, but it is the Light Within that helps us to respond to and follow the example of the 'clearer Light' of Christ.

Not surprisingly, given that Grubb draws so heavily on Jones, this interpretation is consistent with the key aspects of Jones' understanding of the incarnation and atonement: God has always been present in creation; humans can follow ideals and the best ideals are exemplified by Christ; it is only because we know God that we can find God (because only like can know like). One might doubt, however, whether Grubb would reassure those who complained that the Inner Light made the atonement unnecessary: there is still some ambiguity (see my Chapter 6) in the fact that the Inner Light, albeit dim, still provides some illumination.

Regarding the Holy Spirit, Jones, as noted in Chapter 6, has virtually nothing to say on the subject, the exception being his statement that the Holy Spirit is 'the self-communication of God, manifested in persons and producing a Divine-human life'.⁴² As previously noted, Quakers were ambivalent about the Trinity, and there is a certain amount of disagreement among scholars about whether or not the term Inner Light can be used interchangeably with the Holy Spirit.⁴³

Grubb addresses this relationship in his chapter 'The Light Within and the Holy Spirit', asking the key question in the opening sentence: 'Is the Light Within identical with the Holy Spirit?'⁴⁴ Before considering Grubb's conclusion on identity, however, we first need to ascertain how he conceived of the Holy Spirit. In his analysis of Grubb's view, Davie concludes that Grubb is in conflict with both the 'core of conviction' and the Quaker tradition. This is because Grubb is reluctant to use the term 'person' to describe the members of the Trinity, as to do so would mean seeing them as 'conscious selves', which would lead to an unacceptable tritheism.

⁴² Jones, *Social Law*, 261.

⁴³ Cooper, *A Living Faith*, 24.

⁴⁴ Grubb, *Authority*, 120.

The core of conviction uses the term 'persons' in the Nicene creed, however, and the Quaker tradition, while sharing Grubb's misgivings about the term 'persons', still insisted that God actually is Father, Son and Holy Ghost while being one God.⁴⁵

Davie's assessment of Grubb's position is borne out in *Authority and the Light Within*. Grubb writes that when Jn 7:39 says that the 'Spirit was not yet', the fourth Evangelist 'cannot really mean that the resurrection of the Lord made a change in the Divine nature'.⁴⁶ Rather, Grubb says, the words represent 'a strong and startling assertion of the new *apprehension* of God and of His presence that was now possible for men'. For Grubb, the Holy Spirit is 'the source of Christian experience' not a 'metaphysical entity'.⁴⁷ The Holy Spirit is associated with transformation, but is not a 'Power' that is added to men. This process of transformation reveals the true nature; that is, 'The "I" which was "crucified with Christ" was a false and usurping self; the true self is the "I" which lives because "Christ liveth in me" (Gal ii.20)'.⁴⁸ This means, he says, that 'the Holy Spirit is not only God but is also the immanent life of man'.⁴⁹ Thus, it appears that for Grubb the Holy Spirit is identical to the Light Within, because the Light is likewise both divine and human (although he does not make this identification explicitly). Crucially, however, Grubb's understanding of the Holy Spirit is not Trinitarian. Furthermore, although there is not much evidence to go on, Grubb's view seems to be consistent with Jones' statement on the Holy Spirit above.

In summary, in *Authority and the Light Within* Grubb was attempting *inter alia* to show how Jones' understanding of the Inner Light was related to the atonement and the Holy Spirit. He related the Inner Light to Christ by seeing it as that within human nature that recognized the true Light of Christ. And he identified the Inner

⁴⁵ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 134–135.

⁴⁶ Grubb, *Authority*, 121.

⁴⁷ Grubb, *Authority*, 124.

⁴⁸ Grubb, *Authority*, 125.

⁴⁹ Grubb, *Authority*, 125.

Light with the Holy Spirit, although his understanding of the Holy Spirit would be unrecognizable to most Christians.

9.3.2 James Bean

The relationship between the Inner Light and the Holy Spirit was also of interest to James Bean in his review of *Social Law for Friends' Intelligencer*.⁵⁰ Bean felt that Jones' book was not so much a contradiction of Barclay's view as an analysis of how the Holy Spirit performed its work. To make his point, he drew an analogy between spiritual growth and the growth of an acorn into an oak tree: 'As the life of the acorn is quickened by first being still and passive in the ground, to be acted upon, and yielding to that which quickens it grows into a tree; so we are quickened by stillness and communion and yielding to the light which lighteth every man.'⁵¹ He went on to observe that the 'life that quickens' and the 'life that is quickened' cannot be the same, although they are united in development and growth, in the same way as 'the sap and air and sunlight are united in the life of the tree and become one with the tree'. He then placed the analogy in an explicitly Christian framework, making a series of identifications: 'The Holy Spirit is the present Christ; the present Christ is the Inner Light; the Inner Light is the life that quickens (Jn 1:4).'⁵² Thus Bean's identification between the Holy Spirit and the Inner Light, which explicitly mentions Christ and treats the Holy Spirit as an entity resembles a Trinitarian understanding. Furthermore, Bean's perception of Jones' work is not so much that humans are intrinsically divine but that they have the capacity to receive from and be transformed by God in a natural and organic way. This is less contentious than an assertion of divinity of essence, and more in line with early Quaker thought (cf. Barclay's explanation of being 'leavened').

⁵⁰ J. Bean, 'The "Inner Light"', *Friends' Intelligencer* 62 (1905): 189–190.

⁵¹ Bean, 'Inner Light', 190.

⁵² Bean, 'Inner Light', 190.

The fact that Bean felt it necessary to deliver a Christian interpretation by identifying the Inner Light with the present Christ and the Holy Spirit, and to present this as his own interpretation (i.e. in opposition to readings that saw *Social Law* as a refutation of Barclay) perhaps suggests that he did not think that these identifications were clear enough in *Social Law* itself.

Bean and Grubb thus represent different interpretations of Jones' formulation of the Inner Light in relation to the Holy Spirit and Christ, arising in part out of their different interpretations of the Holy Spirit. Diverse interpretations, as we will now see, continued over the coming decades.

9.4 Later reception of Jones' view of the divinity of human nature

Later commentators had material other than *Social Law* to draw on when critiquing Jones' views. Here I consider three such later criticisms, by Martin Davie, Carole Spencer and Richard Ullmann.

In his analysis of Jones' *Dynamic Faith* in *British Quaker Theology*, Davie concludes that 'Jones sees the possibility of direct personal experience of God as based on the nature and psychology of Man, whereas the Quaker tradition sees it as based on the supernatural activity of God.'⁵³ As noted regarding the extract from *Dynamic Faith* discussed at the start of Section 7.3.1 in Chapter 7, it is certainly true that for Jones humans do know God by an inherent ability, and that this ability is explicable by psychology. But this is only because God is self-revealing. Jones never separated the activity of God from the receptivity of humans, as Davie seems to imply. I suggest that Davie's criticism arises from the fact that he does not consider that Jones viewed the universe as fundamentally spiritual. For Jones, there is no difference between 'natural' and 'supernatural'. (To quote the passage from 'Why I enroll'

⁵³ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 106.

again, he was seeking to avoid the 'defeative dualism of a two-world theory'.⁵⁴)

Davie's reference to the 'supernatural activity of God', then, refers to a category of action that would not be recognized as discrete by Jones.

In her book *Holiness*, Carole Spencer objects to Jones' understanding of the soul. She ends her brief analysis of Jones and the Inner Light by quoting the final passage from *New Studies* about the soul being the light of man (referred to in Chapter 7, Section 7.3.1): 'When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire is gone out, THE SOUL IS THE LIGHT OF MAN.'⁵⁵ She concludes that 'Jones created an "inner light mysticism" in which the soul was its own authority, an elevated humanism which severed the inward light from Christ. Consequently, liberal Quakerism developed a humanistic confidence in the soul as supreme.' There are two issues that need to be addressed regarding Spencer's statement. The first is whether Spencer's analysis of Jones' thought is correct. The second is whether she is correct in pinning the direction taken by liberal Quakerism on Jones' thought.

Regarding the first point, it is certainly understandable why Spencer should point to the severance of the inward light and Christ from the passage she quotes. However, the passage needs to be seen in the context of its preceding paragraph, which, as noted in Chapter 7, links knowledge of God to a relationship with God.

Furthermore, as argued in Chapter 6, Jones believed that the God who dwells within us is the God that was most fully revealed in the historical Christ. In other words, by quoting this passage in isolation Spencer misses those connections that Jones does see between the Inner Light and Christ. Regarding the second point, she is broadly correct, given the consensus of scholarly opinion on the influence of Jones within Quakerism, the psychological turn (and its implications) that can be traced to him, and the interpretations of the divinity of humans that are apparent right from the publication of *Social Law*.

⁵⁴Jones, 'Why I enroll', 211

⁵⁵ Spencer, *Holiness*, 204.

Indeed, the influence of Jones regarding psychology is apparent in Richard Ullmann's slim volume *Friends and Truth* (1955). Ullman does not refer to Jones specifically, but his name is surely behind the observation that 'For a long time it has been fashionable amongst us to decry the lack of psychological insight of our founding fathers because they had held that the Inner Light was not part of human nature but something given in addition to it.'⁵⁶ Ullmann continues by criticizing this psychological turn, complaining that contemporary psychology has pushed our thinking in the direction of identifying 'that of God' with 'something of man'. This, he continues, means that God is turned into an image within man's unconscious mind, and religion necessarily becomes 'a relationship between different levels of the human soul itself'.⁵⁷ Ullmann insists, though, that "'that of God" is of *God*, not of man; religious experience is not a soliloquy of man with himself, but a confrontation of man with that which is infinitely greater than man at his greatest.'⁵⁸

Again, Ullmann's criticism is understandable. William James might well have concurred in fact, given that, as we saw in Chapter 3, he had suggested that the 'more' could be 'a larger and more godlike self'.⁵⁹ But once again I suggest that this is a criticism that does not reflect Jones' thought. Consider, for example, the letter Jones wrote to Ellen Carr referred to in Chapter 4. Her conceptual difficulty of praying to a God who was within mirrors Ullmann's complaint, but Jones, recall, likened prayer to sunlight coming through a window: 'There can be a point of light from God break [*sic*] into our human souls, but there is infinitely more of Him beyond us.'⁶⁰ In other words, prayer is far from a soliloquy. What Ullmann has done is to focus on the immanence of God, which is undoubtedly an emphasis found in

⁵⁶ R.K. Ullmann, *Friends and Truth* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1955), 33.

⁵⁷ Ullmann, *Friends and Truth*, 33.

⁵⁸ Ullmann, *Friends and Truth*, 34.

⁵⁹ James, *Varieties*, 525.

⁶⁰ To Ellen Carr, 6 February 1935, HC Box 57.

Jones, but to neglect the transcendence that is also apparent, at least in later works (see Chapter 4).

This analysis of three commentators suggests that Jones might have avoided confusion if he had been more consistent and deliberate in linking the two sides of his various 'mutual and reciprocal correspondence' formulations regarding God and humans. He viewed the universe as fundamentally spiritual and as revealing a God who was both immanent and transcendent, but this is not always apparent. In other words, he might have avoided criticism if had expressed himself more carefully in a way that reduced the risk of his words being taken out of context. There is, in fact, one extant letter in which Jones recognizes this need for his writing to be considered as a whole. Violet Holdsworth, a close friend of the Jones family, must have taken him to task about an ambiguous statement that could be misinterpreted, and Jones responds as follows:

Thou art quite right in criticizing my statement on p. 135 of 'The Radiant Life' that the 'spiritual universe has man's soul for the center'. It is a very loose statement and if it were taken out of its setting in the book it would give a wholly wrong impression. The entire book is evidence that I do not hold for a minute the Naturalistic-humanistic view. What I was meaning was that for our world of experience one must begin from within man's spirit and not from without. But the way it is put and too loose and ambiguous and must be changed as soon as possible.⁶¹

This need to take Jones' work as a whole is worth bearing in mind as we consider our next commentator, Hugh Rock.

9.5 A critique of Hugh Rock's interpretation of Jones' mysticism

Rock argues that Jones on the one hand established the mystical origins of Quakerism and on the other rejected the mystical tradition. Jones, he says, managed this by effecting a theological conjuring trick in that the heart of his

⁶¹ To Violet Holdsworth, 9 November 1944, HC Box 59.

religion was ‘a religious humanism comprising a rational ethics allied to a powerful social gospel’ that he termed affirmation mysticism.⁶² This meant that Jones ‘aborted mysticism as the basis of Quakerism by keeping the name without the substance’.⁶³ The claim is an important one regarding Quakerism’s purported identity as a mystical religion, especially for today’s non-theist Quakers, and in this respect it is notable that Rock has served on the steering group for the Non-theist Friends Network.⁶⁴

I will critique Rock’s paper first according to his main argument about mysticism, and second in relation to subsidiary themes, for example concerning his comments on Jones’ motivation, view of God, and view of Christ. In brief, I agree that Rock has grounds for concern: Jones did, as we saw in the last chapter, reject negation mysticism but keep the term mysticism. The main problem I see with Rock’s analysis, however, is that the definition of mysticism he adopts as standard does not mention God. This means that when he compares Jones’ view with this proposed definition much of what Jones believed and valued about God is lost. It also means that when Rock says that Jones did not adopt his (Rock’s) proposed definition, and therefore did not establish Quakerism as a mystical religion, all he is really saying is that Jones did not establish Quakerism as a mystical religion if Rock’s definition of mysticism is adopted. With this methodology, it would be possible to adopt numerous definitions of mysticism and show that Jones did not establish Quakerism as a mystical religion in relation to them.

9.5.1 Rock’s main argument

Rock defines mysticism as ‘direct experience of fifth dimension dualism’⁶⁵ and notes that here are three components to this definition: the fifth dimension (John Hick’s

⁶² Rock, ‘Jones never did establish’, 49.

⁶³ Rock, ‘Jones never did establish’, 61.

⁶⁴ See <https://nontheist-quakers.org.uk/about/organisation-of-nontheist-friends-network/>, accessed 15 December 2017 in relation to steering group members 2017–2018.

⁶⁵ Rock, ‘Jones never did establish’, 57.

term) refers to a dimension of reality beyond human senses; dualism refers to the ethicization of that dimension (in Plato, the fifth dimension is a source of moral good); and direct experience refers to the fact that although the fifth dimension is unknowable by human senses it can occasionally be entered or experienced. He then proceeds to characterize Jones' mysticism in relation to this proposed definition. (Note that Rock renames Jones' affirmation mysticism as 'redirected mysticism', as he, with good reason, contends that Jones' terminology implies a 'speculative' list of God's attributes such as omniscience that Jones does not in fact provide.⁶⁶)

Rock views Jones' (so-called) redirected mysticism as relying on logic rather than experience, in the sense that the fifth dimension is 'no longer necessarily the source of ethical commands which seem to be actually felt in the sensual experience'.⁶⁷ Rather, the source of ethics is the dynamics of human relationships. Thus Rock's view of Jones' mysticism is a 'logical' appreciation of ethics.⁶⁸ This, he says, is a formulation which no sensual mystic would credit as mystical experience, which means that Jones keeps the term mysticism but without any substance.⁶⁹ This move enabled Jones to harness 'a rational religion and social gospel under the seeming bridle of mysticism'.⁷⁰

I suggest, however, that Rock has misrepresented Jones' view of mysticism, in part because his starting point is a definition of mysticism that has no mention of God. This approach is in direct contrast to the methodology I used in the last chapter, where my starting point was Jones' own discussion of mysticism throughout his corpus. Thus, my methodology reveals Jones' mysticism (and therefore his understanding of a mystical religion) on his own terms. As illustrated from the cited

⁶⁶ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 51.

⁶⁷ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 59.

⁶⁸ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 59.

⁶⁹ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 61.

⁷⁰ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 61.

quotations from throughout his corpus, Jones' mysticism has as its central tenet an experiential relationship with a personal God.

In addition to his questionable methodology for defining Jones' mysticism, I suggest that Rock emphasizes the human, rational element in Jones' discussions of mysticism, which is certainly present, but ignores Jones' references to a relationship with God. This unbalanced representation occurs because he bases his analysis on a few isolated quotations from Jones, citing material only from *Spiritual Reformers*, *Studies in Mystical Religion* and *Social Law*. This means that he does not give a full picture of Jones' mysticism – notably, Jones' everyday experiences of God are neglected. Furthermore, Rock fails to tie Jones' mysticism to his views about the Inner Light, which means that he does not account for Jones' view of the divine component in human nature. To illustrate the implications of these omissions, I now turn to look at some subsidiary themes in Rock's paper, including his interpretation of Jones' views of God, consciousness, the mystical tradition, Christ, and the Inner Light.

9.5.2 Subsidiary themes

God: Rock represents Jones' picture of God as a fusion of the 'Nature God' of Plato and the 'Community God' that derives from 'Jahweh, the God of the fortunes of the tribe'.⁷¹ Rock does not give any evidence from Jones' work to support this assertion, but merely states that 'Christianity is composed of two different Gods'.⁷² In Chapter 4, I argued similarly that Jones' views were a fusion of two concepts of God, but by using quotations from Jones and considering the historical context I identified these with the personal 'Father' of Christianity and the God of idealism as expressed in Royce. Jones' view of Christianity has certainly been questioned, but his appreciation of the personal nature of God is, I suggest, so fundamental that his thought cannot be understood without it. Rock's neglect of the personal nature of

⁷¹ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 63.

⁷² Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 63.

God in Jones' thought therefore calls much of his analysis into question.

Consciousness: According to Rock, Jones saw consciousness as 'a product of human relationships in our moral and social environment', and held that it was here that God was revealed.⁷³ This makes him, in Rock's term, a 'social theist'. This is only half the story, however. As noted in Chapters 4 and 5, although Jones believed that self-consciousness developed within society, he also believed that the ultimate source of consciousness was God. To view consciousness only in human terms is to exclude God from the picture, which is not true to Jones' thought and overlooks an essential part of his argument about how God and humans are related.

Opinion of the mystical tradition: Rock states that Jones did not like the mystical tradition. This is misleading. As noted in the previous chapter, it is more accurate to say that he did not like what he termed 'negation mysticism'. Affirmation mysticism as exemplified by Woolman, as an experience of God that resulted in action, was the very essence of life for Jones.

Motivation to adopt the mystical tradition: Rock implies that, although Jones disliked mysticism, he embraced it to resist the pressure exerted by Evangelicals to adopt a doctrinal creed, a situation brought to a head by the Richmond Declaration of Faith. Thus for Rock, Jones' union of Quakerism and mysticism had the air of an arranged marriage to a foreign national: 'Jones was attracted to the benefits of citizenship but he did not like the girl'.⁷⁴ This rather cynical view does not reflect Jones' self-assessment though. He says, 'I began my studies of mysticism actuated at first by my interest in it as a historical phenomenon, but I soon discovered that it was the heart and essence of any religion for which I supremely cared.'⁷⁵ In other words, Jones' interest was first academic and then, once he had understood and associated mysticism with Quakerism, it became a passionate personal interest

⁷³ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 54.

⁷⁴ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 53.

⁷⁵ Jones, *Middle Years*, 192.

fuelled by experience. Furthermore, although there were certainly tensions between evangelical and more 'mystical' interpretations of Quakerism, Rock's reference to the Richmond Declaration is not clearly relevant, as this was finalized in 1887. Any outside factors that strengthened (rather than initially motivated) Jones' popularization of mysticism arose, I suggest, from the wider interest in mysticism and Jones' own experiential basis.

The importance of mysticism: Rock discusses Jones' definition of spiritual religion as set out in *Spiritual Reformers*. He asserts that for Jones 'Spiritual Religion is composed of three parts: the mystical tendency, humanistic or rational tendency, and faith tendency.'⁷⁶ He then goes on to point out that 'Having formulated this new humanist, incarnation mysticism in which mysticism is supplemented and tempered by reason into a "wider synthesis" an unexpected feature emerges in Jones' proposition. Mysticism is relegated to the status of an ornament.... It is "only one element in a vastly richer complex, and it must not be given undue emphasis".'⁷⁷

As we saw in the last chapter, Jones did recognize that there were three elements in religion, in agreement with von Hügel. And he did recognize that mystical intuitions needed to be tested. But this is a long way from relegating mysticism to an 'ornament'. A page after Rock's quotation in *Spiritual Reformers* we find Jones stating that these reformers 'shared with enthusiasm the rediscovery of those treasures which human Reason had produced ... in one way or another they all proclaimed that deep in the central nature of man – an unalienable part of Reason – there was a Light, a Word, an Image of God, something permanent, reliable, universal, and unsundered from God himself.'⁷⁸ So by selecting a quotation in isolation what Rock has done is to overemphasize the role of reason and neglect the

⁷⁶ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 58.

⁷⁷ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 58–59, quoting from *Spiritual Reformers*, xix.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, xxx.

associated relationship with God, the 'mystical' element.

Definition of mystical experience: Rock refers to a particularly vivid religious experience Jones had as a young man when he was walking alone in Dieu-le-Fit and considering his plans for the future. It is an experience that is described by Jones in 'Why I enroll' and *Trail in College* and that is recounted by Vining in her biography. Jones tells it in 'Why I enroll' as follows:

I felt the walls between the visible and the invisible suddenly grow thin, and the Eternal seemed to break through into the world where I was. I saw no flood of light, I heard no voice, but I felt as though I were face to face with a higher order of reality than that of trees or mountains ... I felt that I was being called to a well-defined task in life.⁷⁹

Rock refers to Vining's account, which draws on the slightly different version in *Trail in College*. Commenting on it, he asserts that 'This mystical experience does not qualify as mystical in Jones' own terms of reference ... he distrusted "audition of voices" as evidence of direct experience of God.'⁸⁰ Note first that, although Jones did indeed mistrust auditions, this is irrelevant here, as this experience did not involve voices. The main point is that while this experience may not be mystical according to Rock, it is by my interpretation of Jones' mysticism (because it is a felt experience of God). Crucially, in 'Why I enroll', Jones offers the incident as 'a type of mystic experience which does not reach the stage of ecstasy and which seems affirmative rather than negative'.⁸¹ In other words, Jones himself viewed it as mystical.

The Inner Light: Rock does not mention the Inner Light. I suggested in the last chapter, however, that Jones' formulation of this concept as a fusion of human and divine elements is a crucial component of his understanding of mysticism. To omit it in discussion leads to a partial picture of mysticism because it leads to a neglect of

⁷⁹ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 207.

⁸⁰ Rock, 'Jones never did establish', 59.

⁸¹ Jones, 'Why I enroll', 206.

the divine element that Jones saw as part of human nature.

Christ: Rock asserts that the word Christ operates as a shorthand for a set of ethical principles that includes concern for the sick and poor, inclusion of outcasts, and indifference to material wealth. As explored in Chapter 6, Jones' Christology is certainly ambiguous, and his vision of Christianity undoubtedly has a strong ethical component. Christ was for Jones more than merely a set of principles, however: he was the ultimate revelation of God's character. To divorce Christ from God, as Rock does, is erroneously to reduce Jones' Christology to a purely secular concept.

Mysticism and action: Rock suggests that the ethical call to action arose from human society. This is true in the sense that Jones insisted that conscience was culturally informed (Chapter 5) and that affirmation mystics were moved by their experience to transform the society in which they were embedded (Chapter 8). It is again only half the story though, in that Jones is clear that those ethical commands arose from God. Indeed, he was of the opinion that philanthropic activity untouched by God was liable to be 'thin and weak'.⁸²

In essence, then, Rock offers a characterization of Jones' mysticism that has no reference to a personal God. Jones' mysticism is, in Rock's interpretation, a logical appropriation of ethics rather than the experiential aspect of a loving relationship with God that leads to social action. Consequently, there is no sense that God transforms or empowers the individual, no indication that God might be encountered in a group, and no mention of how humans and God are in mutual and reciprocal correspondence. All these themes are leitmotifs in *Social Law* and indeed throughout Jones' corpus and need to be accounted for. Rock has come to his conclusion by concentrating on a very small part of Jones' writings, and by interpreting even this out of context. Rock accuses Jones of effecting a theological conjuring trick regarding mysticism by 'keeping the name without the substance'.

⁸² Jones, *Quakerism, A Spiritual Movement*, 136-137.

My analysis here suggests that it is actually Rock himself who has effected the trick, by proposing a characterization of Jones' mysticism that cuts out its central thesis of an ethically concerned, personal God.

Conclusion

When Wilmer Cooper reflected on the legacy of Rufus Jones to Quakerism, he concluded that it could be summed up in Jones' use of George Fox's well-known phrase, 'that of God in everyone'.⁸³ As noted previously, the phrase encapsulates how humans and God are related and is closely related to the term the Inner Light. It is the main theme of *Social Law* and a topic that Jones returned to time and again throughout his life. The reception of *Social Law* itself and of the ideas it contains is, then, an important part of the history of Quakerism. This chapter has considered the reaction to (and extension of) Jones' novel formulation of the human–divine relationship both immediately following the publication of *Social Law* and in the century afterwards.

Clearly, Jones views were more popular with liberal than with evangelical Quakers, and this meant that, broadly speaking, they were more popular in England than in America, and more popular among the young and educated than among the old.⁸⁴ Evangelical Quakers criticized departures from traditional doctrine, whereas liberal acceptance seems to have occurred via a gradual but largely uncritical process of assimilation such that, as Davie points out, Jones' view that the Inner Light was part of human nature simply became axiomatic.⁸⁵

A number of points can be made regarding how Jones' thought was interpreted. First, it is essential to recognize that Jones refused to separate God from humans,

⁸³ Cooper, 'Reflections', 31.

⁸⁴ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 122.

⁸⁵ Davie, 'Reflections on an ecumenical pilgrimage', 194.

the sacred from the secular, the inner life from social action. As he put it in *The Inner Life* in relation to dichotomies such as these, 'In place of the *either-or* formulations that force a choice between the halves of great spiritual realities I should put the living and undivided whole. Instead of selecting *either-or*, I prefer to take *both*.'⁸⁶ This preference for 'both' means that his thought needs to be considered as a whole. His informal style, however, means that it is easy to quote one side of the 'either-or' pair out of context. Thus it is possible to find passages that seem to divinize humanity because they do not recognize the relationship of humans to a God who is self-revealing. And it is possible to find passages that seem to promote humanism because they emphasize the need for human effort but neglect God's part in inspiring and facilitating that effort.

Second, and related to the point above, readers who endorsed Jones' view seem to have interpreted him in a way that reinforced their previous beliefs. Thus, Grubb and Bean interpreted the Inner Light in terms of their existing, but differing, views on the Holy Spirit. Scull and Hohnan, who were proponents of New Thought and Swedenborgianism, respectively, interpreted Jones as saying that humans were divine. And the non-theist Quaker Rock sees him as embracing an almost non-theistic version of mysticism and humanism. There is a sense, then, in which Jones is 'all things to all men'.

Third, there seems to have been little explicit recognition initially of the implications of Jones' use of psychology for the relationship between Quakerism and Christianity, for example regarding how a psychological approach to the human-divine relationship meant a divergence from the core of conviction in relation to universalism or Christology. By 1955, however, Ullmann's objection in Section 9.4 above links the use of psychology with a form of Quakerism that seemed to dispense with traditional Christian ideas about God. It was also at about this time

⁸⁶ Jones, *Inner Life*, 84.

that some Quaker 'radicals' were questioning whether Quakerism should be explicitly Christian.⁸⁷ An exploration of the relationship between Jones' psychological approach and the arguments of these radicals, which would require an analysis of liberal Quaker writings in the 1950s, is outside the scope of this thesis. However, given that I have suggested that Jones' psychologically informed view of Quakerism is potentially pluralistic, it seems reasonable to assume that a relationship of some sort does exist.

Regarding how Jones' thought is interpreted today, Wilmer Cooper makes two general points about Jones' legacy in the United States in 2005 in relation to the phrase 'that of God in everyone'. The first is that the phrase as used by most Quakers stresses the immanence of God and there is often little sense of the transcendence of God, which leads to 'a kind of humanism'.⁸⁸ This stress on God's immanence can likewise be seen in many of the comments in letters and published works noted in this chapter. The second is that because Quakers today make little reference to Christ, the phrase 'that of God' can seem as if God is somehow 'parcelled out' to everyone: God is conceived of like a puzzle, in that if you put together the piece in every individual you would have God. Again, this is an understandable reaction to Jones' writings that is in line with the comments above.

The fuller analysis of Jones' thought presented in this thesis, however, suggests that neither of Cooper's observations is an accurate representation of Jones' ideas about God or the Inner Light. That is, although it can be seen how these interpretations could emerge from Jones' writings, they do not represent the fullness of his thought but rather are unbalanced representations resulting in part from his *informal style* and *theological naivety*. Jones recognized that God was not only immanent but also transcendent, he insisted that he was not a humanist, and he saw Christ to be the fullest revelation of God breaking into the Universe. But he did not express these

⁸⁷ Davie, *British Quaker Theology*, 145ff.

⁸⁸ Cooper, 'Reflections', 32.

convictions clearly and consistently. Aiken in fact makes a similar point in relation to Jones' Christology, when he suggests that if Jones had explicitly referred his theistic humanism to its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus he might have kept liberal Quakerism rooted in its Christian heritage.⁸⁹

In essence then, while Chapter 7 argued that Jones' arguments regarding the human–divine nature of the Inner Light were too superficial to be convincing, this chapter has identified a further complication, namely that his thought has often been interpreted or extended in ways that he did not intend, and, furthermore, that these interpretations have contributed to a form of Quakerism that is consciously pluralistic. Some possible solutions to the first of these remarks and some reflections on the second are given in the next, and final, chapter.

⁸⁹ Aiken, 'Who took the Christ out of Quakerism?', 49.

Chapter 10

Conclusion: Does Rufus Jones [still] speak to our time?

I am convinced, however, that when the writer of a book succeeds in making God actually real to his readers his work immediately takes its place among the most constructive contributions that are made to the assets of the race.¹

There is little doubt that Rufus Jones left Quakerism a controversial legacy. While his engagement with 'modern thought' made faith credible for many Quakers, especially those who were young and well educated, others objected that his reformulation of the Inner Light brought into question the need for Christ and promoted humanism. Thus, while he has been commended for spiritually revitalizing significant parts of the Society, he has also been criticized for making Quakerism Christless. Furthermore, I have suggested that his engagement with idealism and psychology was one factor in the journey towards today's pluralistic British Quakerism: while this journey has been welcomed by some, it is a cause for concern for others, and it certainly requires that many traditional Quaker practices need to be reframed within this new paradigm.

In spite of the fact that Jones' ideas, especially those on the Inner Light and mysticism, were sweepingly influential within Quakerism, and indeed had an impact on American spirituality generally, they have received little critical analysis. Initially, evangelical Quakers criticized him for departing from their biblically based beliefs,

¹ Jones, *Pathways*, viii.

but Liberal Quakers do not seem to have engaged in any great depth with what he replaced these beliefs with, nor questioned his attribution of authority to psychology: letters to Jones from Rowntree, Newman and Ellis give the impression that Jones' ideas took hold gradually rather than being the subject of debate among liberals. In the decades that followed, some voices questioned his use of psychology (e.g. H. G. Wood) and his emphasis on mysticism (e.g. William Littleboy), but Davie and Cooper suggest that on the whole Jones' views simply became axiomatic for Liberal Quakers. More recent studies of Jones have criticized his theory of the origin of Quakerism in continental mysticism, but have neither considered the evidence he provides for his formulation of the Inner Light nor analysed this formulation in relation to his thought as a whole in its historical context.

My thesis has thus attempted to provide a systematic and critical treatment of Jones' thought (which he himself often presents in a somewhat piecemeal manner and conveys in an informal, conversational style), to identify the influences on that thought from wider movements in philosophy, psychology and liberal theology, and to assess how he has been interpreted. My focus was on *Social Law in the Spiritual World*, which was Jones' first explicit attempt to make Christianity (as he understood it) and Quakerism consistent with modern thought. His subsequent books encompass the spiritual life, mysticism, Quaker history and children's stories, but to a greater or lesser extent they all revisit the themes set forth in *Social Law* from different angles. This book, then, provides a tractable distillation of his key ideas.

My approach was first to identify the Quaker-informed spiritual, intellectual and experiential factors that contributed to Jones' developing concept of God. I then discussed those elements of 'modern thought' that he sought to synthesize with his Quaker beliefs. These included, in particular, the liberal theology, psychology and idealism that Jones encountered at Harvard or through James. With this background in place, I analysed Jones' attempted synthesis in relation to his views on God,

human nature and Christ. I then suggested that this synthesis found its way to the heart of Quakerism because Jones used it to reformulate the traditional dualistic interpretation of the Inner Light, and that this interpretation gained traction because Jones associated it with mysticism, a subject of widespread lay and academic fascination in early 20th century America. Finally, I considered the reaction and interpretation of his readers both immediately following publication of *Social Law* and more recently, referring to archival letters and published articles and books.

I identified five factors that contributed to the controversy apparent in Jones' legacy and to the diverse interpretations of his thought.

(1) Although Jones is best described as a Christian theist, the theism he actually presents is multivalent. This is because he draws on the idealism of Royce, which can be interpreted as pantheistic, and the 'more' of James, which can be interpreted as an individual's 'higher self'.

(2) Jones used James' psychology to argue that humans and God are inherently related through the subconscious. This reliance on psychology meant that the need for and the uniqueness of Christ were brought into question. Furthermore, not only is his use of psychology selective and problematic, but the supporting evidence he provides for this psychologically informed view is too superficial to be convincing: the biblical evidence amounts to 'proof texts'; the philosophical evidence would become outdated within Jones' lifetime; and the universal experience of God implied by this view was not borne out in practice.

(3) Jones had an experiential approach to Christianity, meaning that at times what he seems to be defending is not so much Christian doctrine as his own experience of God as present in everyday life. In this sense, he exemplifies James' theory that people chose an explanation of the universe that reflects their temperament. I suggested that this is one reason why he minimized any sense of

separation from God and the impact of sin, both of which are important strands of evangelical Christianity.

(4) Jones deliberately avoided theological concepts, which meant that he did not have the tools to address important theological issues, in particular those related to the differentiation between humans, Christ and God.

(5) Finally, the fact that Jones was attempting to synthesize complex ideas and present them informally for lay people meant that he was vulnerable to being misinterpreted. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that he preferred to take a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' approach to spiritual dichotomies. In particular, attributions of humanism arise because commentators fail to consider his work as a whole and/or fail to acknowledge that he viewed the universe as fundamentally spiritual.

In this final chapter I summarise the main line of argument of the thesis in Section 10.1. In Section 10.2, I consider how, a century and a half after his birth, Jones' ideas are still relevant to a number of issues being discussed in the areas of spirituality and the relationship between science and religion. Finally, I offer a few closing reflections.

10.1 God, the Inner Light and mysticism in *Social Law*

I started in *Chapter 2* by examining Jones' childhood in a rural and spiritually vibrant Quaker community, noting that his ideas of God were shaped by the Bible and by experience – both his own and that of others. For Jones, God was characterized by love and was actively involved in guiding individuals to do good works, and he professed to have always been aware of God's presence and to have taken it for granted that God communicated with his relatives and local Quakers. As a teenager at Haverford College, Jones' reading of Emerson was a watershed event that convinced him that Quakerism was a mystical religion characterized by an

experiential relationship with God, and he developed an abiding interest in mysticism. He was deeply attracted to the idea of his teacher Pliny Chase in relation to the Inner Light, namely that an individual's inner life formed a living junction with 'Eternal Reality', and he interpreted Clement of Alexandria in a way that was in line with this interpretation of the human–divine relationship, using Clements' phrases 'mutual and reciprocal correspondence' and 'harmonized man' throughout his corpus. Furthermore, Drummond's *Natural Law* convinced him that science could provide insights into God and the spiritual world. I concluded that a personal experience of God was integral to Jones' theology and termed this his *experiential basis*.

In *Chapter 3* I provided some background on the aspects of 'modern thought' that Jones encountered after his student days. The Manchester Conference of 1895 brought the liberal/modernist strand of Quakerism to prominence in England, and Jones spear-headed this agenda in America. Liberal/modernist Quakers embraced science, and of particular interest to Jones was the new science of psychology, especially as propounded by William James, with whom he corresponded. James' fascination with psychic phenomena contributed to his theory of the subconscious, and this, combined with his interest in Transcendentalism, led him to talk of a 'more' in which we live and move. Many Liberal Quakers enthusiastically championed James and his work, while skirting over the issue of whether the 'more' was compatible with the Christian God. I suggested that the impetus for writing *Social Law* arose from Jones' year at Harvard, where he encountered Josiah Royce and his theory of 'the Absolute', and Francis Peabody with his interest in the Social Gospel. I concluded that, although James' theory of the subconscious and Royce's idealism fitted with Jones' experience of contact with a deeper reality, neither James nor Royce saw this deeper reality as necessarily personal or triune. The rest of the thesis investigated how Jones attempted to synthesize ideas from Royce and James with ideas about the personal Christian God.

I thus started in *Chapter 4* by considering Jones' view of God against the background of the personalism of Bowne and the impersonal language favoured by many prominent scholars of mysticism. I showed how Jones sought to synthesize the personal Christian God with the potentially impersonal God or ultimate consciousness of idealism using insights from James' psychology. For example, Jones draws on James to argue that one aspect of consciousness is the ability to work for desired ends, and, by assuming that these ends are good, he implicitly assumes that God is characterized by love. What is clear from his treatment is that the biblical idea of the character of God and his own experience are primary, in the sense that psychology and idealism are made to fit the idea of a personal God who is implicitly assumed to be characterized by love. This means that although Jones *assumes* a Christian character of God, his theism is in fact multivalent.

One of the key assumptions of Jones' analysis of God is that God is the ultimate consciousness and that human consciousness is a finite expression of this ultimate consciousness. In *Chapter 5* I therefore focused on the implications of this assumption for Jones' views on human nature. Specifically, I looked at how Jones understood consciousness, the subconscious, sin, salvation, habit and conscience in relation to God and in relation to society. I concluded that for Jones humans are socio-spiritual beings. Thus, for example, consciousness originates with God but develops within society; and individuals can be transformed through habitually listening to and obeying the divine sense of 'ought' in a conscience formed and informed by society. I pointed out that Jones' emphasis on the role of human effort resulted in attributions of humanism, but suggested that his deeply theistic perspective of human nature and belief in a spiritual universe mean that any label of humanism needs at the very least a qualifier such as 'theistic'.

Jones' view of humans as socio-spiritual beings raises questions about the role of Christ. If humans are related to God by consciousness, what need is there for Christ? *Chapter 6*, explores this issue. My strategy was to compare *Social Law* with

Practical Christianity, published a few years before *Social Law*, and with *The Double Search*, published a few years after. I found that Jones' Christology developed over this time period, as he came to attribute more authority to psychology and to use fewer doctrinal-sounding formulae. I concluded that in all three books he is clear that Christ is the supreme reflection of God's character, that Christ draws people to God, and that the incarnation is an inevitable occurrence in a universe with a personal God at its centre. In other areas he is less consistent, especially in relation to terminology and psychology. In *Social Law*, he argues that some Christological doctrines are consistent with psychology. Specifically, the fact that Christ is both human and divine is an expression of the psychologically informed insight that (in Jones' view) all humans are conjunct with God, and the atonement is an expression of the psychologically inspired insight that individuals follow ideals. Thus, Christ is not the second person of the Trinity but is related to God in the same way as humans generally, and it is not so much union with the historical Christ that a Christian experiences as inner strength and inspiration through the spirit that was supremely revealed in Christ.

At the end of this chapter, I provided an interim summary of Jones' view of Christianity, pointing out that Jones believed in a personal, loving God in relationship with humans through the subconscious and revealed primarily but not exclusively in the historical Christ. Furthermore, his understanding was not Trinitarian and was opposed to Calvinism, but has points of contact with aspects of Clement and recent work by the Orthodox theologian Christopher Knight. It was biblically informed, but took experience, idealism and psychology as more authoritative than Scripture.

Having treated Jones' view of Christianity in some detail, the groundwork was established to look at Jones' distinctly Quaker contribution, namely his reformulation of the Inner Light and his insistence that mysticism should result in action.

In *Chapter 7*, I discussed how Jones expressed the relationship between God and human nature in terms of the Inner Light. Having given some background on how the Inner Light has been understood through Quaker history, I critiqued the evidence that Jones gives for his proposal that the Inner Light was an inherent part of human nature rather than something ‘foreign’ injected into the soul. I concluded that the biblical, psychological and philosophical evidence that Jones provides is too superficial to be convincing. Furthermore, the universal experience of God that would seem to be suggested by Jones’ formulation does not actually occur in practice, and although Jones does address this problem in passing, he does not treat it in the detail that its importance warrants. A brief review of books written after *Social Law* revealed that Jones maintained this view of the Inner Light as both divine and human, even in the face of problems arising from the theories of Freud and Jung. Furthermore, he expressed it in different ways at different times, depending on the type of book he was writing. While Jones’ relatively unsophisticated arguments are appropriate for his deliberately informal style, the result is that a central tenet of Liberal Quakerism has somewhat shaky intellectual foundations.

I then suggested that Jones’ ideas about the Inner Light gained traction within Quakerism because he linked them with mysticism. Mysticism, or more precisely a fascination with mysticism, was au courant in the first few decades of the 20th century, and provided a natural framework within which to express religious experience and the relationship between humans and God, or the Inner Light. In *Chapter 8* I started by giving some historical context, tracing how mysticism evolved from being disreputable to a respectable field of research at the turn of the 20th century. I then introduced some of Jones’ contemporaries, namely Evelyn Underhill, William Inge, Friedrich von Hügel and Francis Peabody, briefly pointing out where their views differed from Jones’. I suggested that Jones viewed mysticism as a felt experience of God that led to action, and identified his unique contributions as the

terms affirmation and negation mysticism and his emphasis on the importance of the group. I argued that his view of mysticism can be seen as grand synthesis of his views on Quakerism, religious experience, Christianity and modern thought.

Finally, *Chapter 9* focused on how Jones' ideas about the Inner Light have been received, extended and interpreted. I started by analysing reviews and archival letters in relation to *Social Law*, noting that right from the start his formulation was open to a variety of interpretations, some of which were in line with the view of human nature held by movements (such as New Thought) on the fringes of Christianity. I then looked at two attempts, by Edward Grubb and James Bean, to relate Jones' ideas on the Inner Light to the atonement and the Holy Spirit. Next, I considered how Jones was interpreted in the decades after *Social Law*, noting that later commentators accused Jones of making humans divine, with Ullmann and Davie recognizing that this occurred because of his use of psychology. Finally, I critiqued an article by Hugh Rock that offers an interpretation of Jones' mysticism that veers towards seeing God as a set of ethical principles rather than the loving father of Christianity. I suggested that these diverse interpretations occur because commentators sometimes fail to see Jones' work as a whole and to acknowledge that, as he put it, he preferred to take 'both' rather than 'either-or' in relation to many spiritual dichotomies.

In conclusion, it can be seen that Jones' attempted synthesis drew together many diverse strands of thought – Christianity, idealism, psychology, mysticism, social action, personal experience and Quaker concepts – making it rich, wide-ranging and complex. Today, however, Jones' 'modern thought' is no longer modern: idealism is no longer the prevailing philosophy, theories of the subconscious have revealed 'hissing serpents', and liberal optimism suffered in the light of two world wars. The next section considers some of the implications for these shifts in relation to Jones' legacy.

10.2 Does Rufus Jones [still] speak to our time?

In 1951, Harry Fosdick, the American liberal pastor and radio broadcaster, lamented that his generation desperately needed to hear Jones' message but that many of his books were out of print and Jones himself had 'fallen on sleep'.² His solution was to publish an anthology of Jones' writings entitled *Rufus Jones Speaks to our Time*. Given Jones' influence on Quakerism, we might well ask whether, more than half a century after Fosdick's lament, Jones still speaks – to our own time.

I suggest that he does, on three main topics. The first is the area of theological anthropology, in that Jones' views of humans as socio-spiritual beings resonate with many current understandings of what it means to be human in relation to God. The second is the area of religious experience, in that underneath Jones' somewhat dated mystical terminology he has a very broad picture of what religious experience entails. The third is the perennial question of how prayer and contemplation should be related to social action, in that Jones' affirmative mysticism emphasizes that the two are mutually enriching. The following three sections are offered more in the spirit of a smorgasbord of topics for further research than as a comprehensive analysis.

10.2.1 *The Inner Light and theological anthropology*

I have suggested throughout my thesis that Jones' evidence for his theory of the Inner Light was generally fairly superficial and easy to criticize. Had he been alive today, he might well have drawn on a number of developments in theological anthropology to defend his views. These developments might offer starting points for a more rigorous theological treatment of the Inner Light.

Jones' view of the Inner Light assumes that humans are socio-spiritual beings, a conception that is discussed from a number of angles in a volume of essays entitled

² Fosdick, *Rufus Jones Speaks to our Time*, v.

Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature.³ Joel Green, for example, considers how biblical authors have considered both of these aspects of human nature.⁴ He concludes that 'It is axiomatic in Old Testament scholarship today that human beings must be understood in their fully integrated, embodied existence. Humans do not possess a body and soul, but are human only as body and soul.'⁵ Furthermore, the Old Testament insists that 'human beings cannot be understood in their individuality'.⁶ Thus although Jones did not make use of the Old Testament, there are possible resonances with his view that humans are not dualistic and are socially embedded that could be usefully researched. Doing so might go some way to making Jones' view of the Inner Light more acceptable to evangelical Quakers.

Another area of current interest relates to Jones' conviction that consciousness arises in God. Today this view falls under the remit of the 'hard problem of consciousness', namely the means by which a physical brain can give rise to conscious experience. Jones' views would suffer in the hands of those such as Daniel Dennett, who have proposed naturalistic explanations for consciousness and deny that consciousness exists apart from the brain.⁷ He might, however, have found common ground with some propositions from Buddhism.⁸ The Mahayana Buddhist tradition, for example, holds that the psyche (the whole array of conscious and unconscious experiences that arise from birth to death) emerges from the substrate consciousness, which is characterized by bliss and non-conceptuality and

³ W.S. Brown, N. Murphy & H. N. Malony (eds), *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

⁴ J. B. Green, 'Bodies - that is, human lives': a re-examination of human nature in the Bible, in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* eds W.S. Brown et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998): 149–173.

⁵ Green, 'Bodies', 158.

⁶ Green, 'Bodies', 158.

⁷ For a discussion of some of the issues regarding God and consciousness, see e.g. K. Birkett, 'Conscious objections: God and the consciousness debates', *Zygon* 41 (2006): 249–266.

⁸ See e.g. B. A. Wallace, 'Buddhism and science', in *The Oxford Handbook of Science and Religion*, ed. P. Clayton (Online publication, 2009).

precedes this life and continues after death. This substrate consciousness in turn arises from primordial consciousness, which transcends individuality.

Of course, Jones would have the same problems in reconciling his Christian view of a God characterized by compassion with a primordial consciousness as he did in reconciling it with the God of idealism. One possible way of effecting this reconciliation could be through research that has shown that long-term Buddhist meditators have physical changes in the brain that are associated with increased compassion.⁹ That is, it might be possible to link ideas about a primordial consciousness with a God characterized by compassion in a similar way to how Jones attempted to link the God of idealism and the Christian God through ideas about consciousness involving the ability to choose ends that are good, but now focusing on the compassion-related changes that occur in the brain through purported contact with God through meditation. As far as I know, however, the possible theoretical links between Buddhist thought and Jones' ideas have not been explored in relation to a theory of mind. Given that Quakers have developed working partnerships with some Buddhist groups and that some Quakers self-identify as Buddhist Quakers, however, this area might be worth exploring further.¹⁰

Finally, recall that Jones' understanding of mysticism is that religious experiences all involve an experience of God but are expressed according to cultural and personal expectations. Given that for Jones God was ultimate consciousness, we might thus expect that neurologically his views would be manifested in different individuals through similar brain activity that is interpreted in different ways. This, in fact, is precisely what was found by the neuroscientist Andrew Newberg: he conducted brain scans of Christian nuns engaging in centring prayer and Buddhists practising

⁹ See e.g. C. Vieton, T. Amorok & M. Schlitz, 'I to we: the role of consciousness transformation in compassion and altruism', *Zygon* 41 (2006): 915–931

¹⁰ For example there are links between the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and Thich Nant Hanh's community in France. See also S. B. King, 'Religion as practice: a Zen–Quaker internal dialogue', *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 14 (1994): 157–162.

meditation and found that the same neurological changes were occurring in both groups, although they interpreted the experience according to their beliefs.¹¹

Furthermore, Jones surmised, recall, that the lack of such experiences in an individual may be down to their 'psychic disposition'. This hypothesis is in line with research by neurophysiologist Shanida Nataraja, who links the ability to have a religious experience with increased lability in the temporal nodes.¹²

In summary, Jones' conception of the Inner Light might gain credence through associating it with Hebrew conceptions of humans as spirited bodies, with Buddhist thought on the origin of consciousness, and with research into neurological activity and religious experience.

If Jones is to be brought into dialogue with present-day researchers, however, it might be helpful to look beyond his mystical terminology, which was historically contingent. The following subsection suggests that in fact his understanding of mysticism maps readily onto present-day terminology regarding religious experience.

10.2.2 Moving beyond mystical terminology

Christianity holds that God communicates with people, whether this is seen in terms of the inner assurance of the Holy Spirit, or Christ within, or answered prayer, so Jones' use of the term mysticism to describe an experience of God might be thought to be unnecessary. Is he not just describing the Christian life? Furthermore, Quakers now tend to use the term 'spirituality' rather than mysticism, potentially making Jones seem outdated.¹³ Here I return to Caroline Davis' book *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (referred to in Chapters 7 and 8) to compare Jones' descriptions of mystical experience with the six categories of religious experience

¹¹ A. Newberg and M. R. Waldman, *How God Changes your Brain* (New York: Ballantine, 2010), 48–49.

¹² S. Nataraja, *The Blissful Brain* (London: Octopus, 2008), 79.

¹³ Cooper, 'Reflections', 31.

she identifies.¹⁴ The comparison serves to show that Jones' definition of 'mystical' experience is in fact very wide.

(1) *Interpretive experience*: Davies defines this as an experience that is viewed as religious not because of any unusual features of the experience itself but because it is viewed in the light of a prior religious interpretive framework, for example taking an event to be the answer to prayer.¹⁵ For Jones, all life is potentially an interpretive religious experience, because God is intrinsically bound up with the world. In *Social Law*, for example, he says that the life of an affirmative mystic 'is always like the palimpsest which bears in underlying writing a sacred text ... The slenderest human task becomes glorious because God is in it.'¹⁶ In other words, there is no line between the secular and the sacred, so all experiences can be interpreted as religious.

(2) *Quasi-sensory experience*: Davis defines this as a religious experience in which the primary element is a physical sensation or that involves a 'quasi-sensory' event, such as a vision, dream or voice.¹⁷ Jones was generally distrustful of experiences of this type. As noted in Chapter 5, he appreciated that many curious phenomena could be explained by the operations of the subconscious, and in *Finding the Trail* he admits that although he was interested in dreams and visions and openings, he had learned to trust them 'only so far as they can be tested and verified'.¹⁸

(3) *Revelatory experience*: Davis defines this as an experience that includes a sudden conviction, inspiration or enlightenment.¹⁹ Jones embraces these. For him they are a natural experience akin to the way any 'genius' experiences a moment of intuition: as he puts it in *Social Law*, in the highest creative moments of a genius

¹⁴ Davis, *Evidential Force*.

¹⁵ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 33.

¹⁶ Jones, *Social Law*, 154.

¹⁷ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 35.

¹⁸ Jones, *Finding the Trail*, 68.

¹⁹ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 39.

there are 'uprushes from below, invasions from regions beyond the ordinary self'.²⁰ He links these specifically to God in his discussion of the subconscious, which 'borders upon the infinite Life, rises out of it, and may receive "incursions" from it'.²¹

(4) *Regenerative experiences*: Davis claims that these are the most frequent type of religious experience among ordinary people, whereby they experience new hope, strength, comfort and peace. These experiences can be mild or overwhelming, daily occurrences or extraordinary one-off events.²² Jones embraced both kinds, the non-dramatic everyday experience and the extraordinary: as seen in Chapter 8, the great mystics may gain vision and strength to transform society but ordinary people can experience peace in everyday life.

(5) *Numinous experience*: Initially defined by Rudolph Otto in *Das Heilige*, a numinous experience involves a sense of awe and 'otherness' but also a fascination and attraction to the numen.²³ *Das Heilige* was published in 1917, more than a decade after *Social Law*, so not surprisingly the 'numinous' terminology is not used therein. Jones certainly appreciated Otto's work, commenting that 'Rudolf Otto has put all contemporary religious students into his debt through his extremely important book, *Das Heilige*',²⁴ perhaps suggesting that he recognized the experience Otto was describing. Perhaps he felt that Otto went some way to addressing his complaint in *Social Law* that there was no language to express religious experiences.²⁵

(6) *Mystical experience*: According to Davis, these experiences include an apprehension of ultimate reality, a sense of freedom from the limitations of time,

²⁰ Jones, *Social Law*, 124.

²¹ Jones, *Social Law*, 111.

²² Davis, *Evidential Force*, 44-45.

²³ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 48.

²⁴ Jones, *Testimony*, 55.

²⁵ Jones, *Social Law*, 145-146.

space and individual ego, or a sense of 'oneness' and bliss or serenity.²⁶ In *Social Law*, Jones attributes this type of experience to a mystic: 'In his highest moments he enters an *eternal now*, in which are past and future, near and far, the visible and the unseen – all one in a living unity of which he himself is an undivided, but a no less real part and parcel'.²⁷

It is apparent, then, that what Jones categorizes as mystical experience spans Davis' six categories of religious experience, of which she defines only one as specifically 'mystical'. With the exception of the numinous, all are described in *Social Law*. This realization may open up discussion among Quakers and academics about Jones' thought by casting it in more up to date and academically acceptable terminology. What is significant and typical of Jones regarding all the experiences described above though is that they provided inner strength for action. This leads us to the next topic, namely how religious experience is related to action.

10.2.3 The relationship between spiritual practices and social action

The relationship between social action and spiritual practices is one of timeless concern. It is expressed in the biblical story of Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary (Lk 10), and crops up regularly in books on the Christian life and contemplative prayer. Rowan Williams, in his recent short book *Being Disciples*, for example, defines discipleship as a 'contemplative mode of life', which involves growing into 'a mature stillness, a poise and an openness to others and the world' so that we can develop 'a transformative mode of living in which the act of God can come through, so as to change ourselves, our immediate environment, our world'.²⁸ Jones likewise viewed these two components as inseparable, but his thought again has to be inferred from scattered comments. The following questions are useful to tease out some of his insights.

²⁶ Davis, *Evidential Force*, 54.

²⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 147.

²⁸ R. Williams, *Being Disciples* (London: SPCK, 2016), 17.

10.2.3.1 What actually are spiritual practices?

As Vining points out, ‘there are no handbooks of mystical training to be found among Rufus Jones’s fifty-four book titles’.²⁹ Jones certainly had a range of spiritual practices though. As we saw in Chapter 2, his childhood mornings started with ‘a long period of family silent worship’; he had a weekly rhythm of attending Quaker meetings; and he was deeply familiar with the Bible. These practices of prayer and Bible study continued long past childhood, as evidenced by a rare glimpse into Jones’ personal devotional life revealed in a letter that was sent to ‘all young friends’ in 1928 on behalf of the Extension Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The closing paragraph gives the following advice: ‘Should we not remember and practice Christs’ [sic] habit of prayer, and recognise the importance He attached to His message? We want to pass on to you the concern expressed recently by our friend Rufus M. Jones that Friends should more actively cultivate the individual devotional life by daily prayer and study of the Scriptures. Let us give God a chance.’³⁰ Given that in Quaker parlance a ‘concern’ expresses a deep conviction, it seems likely that Jones would have practised what he preached and had what is often termed a daily ‘quiet time’. Furthermore, a comment in *Life in College* reveals that self-reflection was an integral part of his life: ‘by the end of my third decade I had learned the secret of withdrawal from the rush and turmoil of the world into the quiet cell of my inner self ... It had become a joy to reflect, to meditate, to be a silent spectator of the drama going on behind the “footlights of consciousness”’.³¹

In later years, he appreciated that spiritual practices did not have to be exclusively Christian, writing in a letter to Edward Brown that in the future ‘The East will impress the West with its techniques of meditation’.³² Perhaps recognizing that

²⁹ Vining, *Friend of Life*, 260.

³⁰ Letter to All ‘Young Friends’ from The Extension Committee, Philadelphia, 21 March 1928. Available from Ancestry.com, US Quaker Meeting Records, 1681-1935 (Haverford College Minutes 1927-1928; collection: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting).

³¹ Jones, *Life in College*, 200.

³² To Edward Brown, 6 March 1945, HC Box 59.

spiritual practices for him had at their heart a relationship with a personal God, however, he warned that meditation came with no guarantee that 'at the end of its long hard road there will be the desired meeting place – the Bethel of the soul'.³³

Indeed, Jones was dubious about techniques and discipline in and of themselves, suggesting that 'routine cut-and-dried' systems of discipline of the type that forge a mystic like St John of the Cross were 'too remote from life to be satisfactory ways into the heart of divine reality'.³⁴ There is some tension here with the above comments about Jones' daily practices, which undoubtedly required some discipline, but it is perhaps resolved if we understand Jones' focus to be on a relationship with God fostered in silence rather than on, for example, breathing or sitting in a certain way.³⁵

In summary, perhaps Jones never wrote a 'handbook on mystical training' because it was not so much techniques that were important (although routine and discipline had roles to play) but an attitude to life that included times of reflection and saw and sought God and the means to transformation potentially everywhere.³⁶

10.2.3.2 How are spiritual practices related to transformation?

It is clear that Jones envisaged that the Christian life would be transformational in regard to character – earlier chapters have discussed Clement's concept of the harmonized man and Jones' complaint that Barclay's dualistic interpretation of the Inner Light left man 'forever unspiritualized'. But how does this transformation occur?

Jones' comments in *Social Law* about negative and affirmation mysticism provide

³³ Jones, *Testimony*, 29.

³⁴ Jones, *Testimony*, 29.

³⁵ Martin Laird helpfully describes this difference in terms of gardening, in that gardening and the skill of coming to inner stillness both create the space for something to happen rather than being ends in themselves (M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land* (London: DLT, 2006), 53–54).

³⁶ This seeking of God in the everyday was part of the 'presence mysticism' associated with Jones (Appelbaum, 'Protestant mysticism').

some clues as to where he saw the vector of transformation lying. Both types of mystic, recall, search for God more assiduously than most, and this search, we can reasonably assume, involved various spiritual practices. However, only the affirmation mystic translates the resulting experience of God into action and thus wins ‘spiritual victory’, which, again it seems reasonable to assume, involves spiritual transformation (for example the ability to withstand temptation or to develop the ‘fruits of the spirit’).³⁷ In other words, Jones seems to be implying that spiritual practice in and of itself is not transformative; rather, transformation occurs when the insights received as the result of this practice are obeyed. This, recall from Chapter 5, is consistent with what Jones’ view of the transformative effect of habit, in that actions that were once strained become second nature.

Today, however, it is known that meditative practices themselves are transformative, in that they lead, for example, to increased compassion, decreased anxiety and improved health, with these shifts reflected in changes in the physical structure of the brain and in levels of certain chemicals and hormones.³⁸ I suspect that Jones, in spite of his preference for the transformative effect of action, would have interpreted these discoveries in terms of his theory of the Inner Light, perhaps arguing that they pointed to the inherent relationship between God and humans being mediated by the brain and body, and to the spiritual nature of the universe. He might also have seen them as resolving the paradox he saw in Quietism, namely that although he regretted the lack of action associated with this tradition, he acknowledged that many Quietist Quakers, who spent much time in silent waiting, had radiant lives.³⁹

Finally, Jones’ comments on the transformation of society make it clear that he

³⁷ Jones, *Social Law*, 152.

³⁸ See e.g. J. Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*, revised edn (London: Piatkus, 2013); C. Vieton, T. Amorok & M. Schlitz, ‘I to we: the role of consciousness transformation in compassion and altruism’, *Zygon* 41 (2006): 915–931.

³⁹ Pryce, ‘Negative to a marked degree’.

recognized that social action and spiritual practices needed to come together insofar as the former needed to have a tangible divine 'feel' to it. He contrasted divinely inspired and enabled service with religious activity that was 'busy and nervous and "creaturely", but without the depth and serenity which come from contact with the central Source of Life',⁴⁰ and pointed out that 'Mere social propaganda and bare philanthropic activity untouched by a vision of the penetrating, co-operating presence of God as the resident power of all permanent advance are thin and weak.'⁴¹ It is this observation that is particularly relevant to today's British Quakerism.

10.2.3.3. What is Jones' message to today's Quakers?

Today, transformation is still a key concept within Quakerism: Ben Dandelion's 2014 Swarthmore Lecture 'Open for transformation', for example, starts with the affirmation that 'We, Quakers in Britain, are in the business of seeking personal, collective and global change rooted in our spiritual experience ... The Quaker way is the way of transformation.'⁴² Note that Dandelion links transformation with spiritual experience. And it is certainly the case that many Quakers of all persuasions, theist and non-theist, embrace a range of spiritual practices from a variety of traditions, including but not limited to Christianity. This is apparent in the many courses offered at Woodbrooke (the Quaker study centre in Birmingham) within the category of 'Spirituality and personal growth', in the 'Experiment with Light' project devised by Rex Ambler, and in the writings of Jennifer Kavanagh and Curt Gardner, for example.⁴³

⁴⁰ Jones, *Testimony*, 27.

⁴¹ Jones, *Quakerism, A Spiritual Movement*, 136.

⁴² B.P. Dandelion, *Open for Transformation*, (London: Quaker Books, 2014), loc. 44, Kindle

⁴³ For Woodbrooke course listings and a description of Experiment with Light, see <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/>. Examples of books on Quaker spirituality include C. Gardner, *God Just Is* (London: Quaker Books, 2012) and J. Kavanagh, *A Little Book of Unknowing* (Winchester: John Hunt, 2015)

There is perhaps a danger, though, that if a theologically pluralistic Quakerism becomes increasingly united by ‘what we do’ rather than ‘what we believe’ then this link could be lost. Indeed, Dandelion notes that Quakers are in danger of becoming a pressure group rather than a group of people led to transform the world out of, and through, experience of transformation.⁴⁴ Jones’ message to today’s Quakers, then, might well be to emphasize that, even if beliefs differ, Quaker socio-political action should arise out of and be infused by personal and group spiritual practices.

Concluding reflections

Dorrien noted that Jones could be quoted either way on the question whether Quakerism should be Christian,⁴⁵ and this thesis has gone some way to explaining why Jones’ position is so difficult to call: he diverged from the core of conviction and from evangelical Quakerism, so the question itself is ambiguous, and he expressed himself differently at different times, so his answer is too. Furthermore, although Jones himself associated the divine component of the Inner Light with the Christian God, others could legitimately associate it with the ‘Absolute’ of Royce or the ‘larger and more godlike self’ of James.⁴⁶

It is perhaps a fool’s errand to speculate on what Jones would have thought about the pluralism of today’s Liberal Quakerism – both individuals and the worldviews that form them change with time. I suspect, though, that he would have wanted to keep Quakerism grounded in the belief in a personal God, to find ways to make Christ’s example known, and to encourage daily spiritual practices, whichever religion they came from, as the ground of personal and societal transformation.

⁴⁴ Dandelion, *Open for Transformation*, loc. 827, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology 1900–1950*, 370.

⁴⁶ James, *Varieties*, 525.

Speculation aside, it is certainly the case that Jones' main ideas, namely that humans are not dualistic, that action and contemplation are linked, and that Quakerism is the 'way of transformation', are scientifically credible and pertinent to ongoing discussions within both today's Quakerism and theological anthropology. In spite of his influence and the continuing relevance of his ideas, however, his thought is relatively little known outside Quaker circles. My hope is that this thesis, by considering Jones' thought in detail, in historical context, and as a whole, has gone some way to illuminating the spiritually inspired, psychologically informed and socially applicable thought of a remarkable man.

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Unpublished material

Details of the Rufus Jones Special Collection at Haverford are available at <http://www.haverford.edu/library/special/aids/rufusjones/rmjones.xml>

Letters from Rufus Jones

- To J. W. Rowntree, 9 February 1904, Box 48.
- To J. W. Rowntree, 5 December 1904, Box 48.
- To Margaret Jones, 2 December 1926, Box 55.
- To Mack Williams, 25 October 1930, Box 56.
- To Norman Penney, 11 November 1930, Box 56.
- To Wilmot V. Metcalf, 24 February 1931, Box 56.
- To Ellen Carr, 6 February 1935, Box 57.
- To Ernest Hocking, 13 June 1937, Box 58.
- To L. Violet Holdsworth, 9 November 1944, Box 59.
- To Edward O. Brown, 6 March 1945, Box 59.
- To Mary Jones, 21 January 1948, Box 60.

Letters to Rufus Jones

- From Joel Bean, 28 September 1893, Box 1.
- From Henry Stanley Newman, 25 November 1895, Box 1.
- From Thomas Newlin, 5 July 1896, Box 1.
- From W. L. Martin, 17 December 1896, Box 1.
- From J. H. Douglas, 17 November 1898, Box 3.
- From S. A. Wood, 27 November 1899, Box 3.
- From Esther Pritchard, 23 February 1900, Box 5.
- From John B. Garrett to Isaac Sharpless (copy sent to Rufus Jones), 21 March 1901, Box 5.
- From Mifflin Houghton, 10 July 1902, Box 5.
- From John H. Douglas, 13 February 1903, Box 7.
- From Gertrude Ellis, 19 December 1903, Box 7.
- From Edward Grubb, 14 November 1904, Box 8.
- From Henry Stanley Newman, 22 December 1904, Box 8.
- From Francis Peabody, 12 December 1904, Box 8.
- From William Pinkham, 12 November 1904, Box 8.
- From David Scull, 24 December 1904, Box 8.
- From George A. Coe, 7 April 1905, Box 9.

From Joan Mary Fry, 13 February 1905, Box 9.
From T. Harvey Haines, 6 January 1905, Box 9.
From William James, 20 November 1906, Box 10.
From George S. Hohnan, 29 August 1907, Box 10.
From George Newman, 15 July 1907, Box 10.
From Rendel Harris, 1908, Box 11.
From William Littleboy, 13 March 1912, Box 12.
From George Newman, 13 March 1913, Box 12.
From James Pratt, 26 April 1915, Box 14.
From W.R. Inge, 1925 (no date), Box 24.
From Gandhi, 28 May 1926, Box 25.
From Evelyn Underhill, 1931, Box 31.
From Douglas Steere, 1 July 1931, Box 31.
From W.R. Inge, 12 June 1947, Box 46.

Lectures by Rufus Jones

'My idea of God', Box 74.

Quaker Records

Records available from: Ancestry.com. *U.S., Quaker Meeting Records, 1681-1935* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.

Jones's welcome, 7 March 1927: Haverford College; Haverford, Pennsylvania; *Minutes, 1924-1935*; Collection: *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes*; Call Number: *N4.3*.

Letter to All 'Young Friends' from The Extension Committee, Philadelphia, 21 March 1928. US Quaker Meeting Records, 1681-1935. Haverford College Minutes 1927-1928; Collection: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Program of talks in Germantown monthly meeting, 1 April 1928: Swarthmore College; Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; *Minutes, 1924-1935*; Collection: *Quaker Meeting Records*; Call Number: *MR Ph 190*.

Appendix A

Schisms in American Quakerism

Figure A.1 Schematic of the schisms occurring within Quakerism, with very broad indications of the authority of the Inner Light. Based on Dandelion, *A Very Short Introduction*, 17-36; Vining, *Friend of Life*, 62-63; Jones, *Middle Years*, 22.

Major external influences

17C: Contended origins of Quakerism (mystical? Puritan?)

18C: Continental Quietism?

19C: Evangelicalism

Manchester Conference 1895

19/20C: Modernism, liberal theology, evangelicalism

20/21C: Pluralism, evangelicalism, tolerance

EARLY QUAKERS
George Fox: **Scripture + Light**

QUIETIST QUAKERS
Light > reason

Great separation 1827 (Philadelphia YM)

HICKSITES (US)
Elias Hicks ('the mystical farmer') **Light > Scripture**
Rural. Later viewed themselves as modernists and then religious liberals. *Friends' Intelligencer*

ORTHODOX (US)
Scripture ≥ Light Urban elite.
The Friend Further split in 1840/50s

WILBURITES (US)
John Wilbur ('the glum schoolteacher')
Scripture + Light Opposed Gurney; 'hedge'; strong in Philadelphia. *The Friend*

GURNEYITES (US + Britain)
Joseph John Gurney ('the charmed banker')
Scripture > Light Evangelical; substitutionary atonement; no 'hedge'; theology in 1887 Richmond Declaration.
Friends Review (est. 1848) Two US strands apparent from 1860s

LIBERAL/MODERNIST (Britain)
Rufus Jones, John Wilhelm Rowntree, Edward Grubb
Light > Scripture. Philosophical idealists; God as immanent; Social Gospel; stress on experiential knowledge. *The Friend* [London], *Friends Quarterly Examiner*

RENEWAL/MODERNIST (US)
Rufus Jones
Light > Scripture Post-millennial; wanted modern Quakerism.
[*American Friend* (1894), FR+CW]

REVIVAL/HOLINESS (US)
David Updegraff
Scripture > Light Pre-millennial; revival meetings.
Christian Worker (est. 1871)

CONSERVATIVE QUAKERS
Christ/Light authoritative ~1500 worldwide. Conserve Quaker traditions. Most in US

LIBERAL QUAKERS
Experience authoritative ~55,000 worldwide. Includes non-Christian, non-theist Quakers; most British Quakers

EVANGELICAL QUAKERS
Scripture > Light ~280,000 worldwide. Popular in Kenya, US. Known as 'Friends' Churches. Pastors and singing

Appendix B

Significant dates and events in the life of Rufus Jones

Page references are from E. Vining, *Friend of Life* (Forgotten Books, [1958] 2012).

Publication years of books are from the list in Vining, 331–333.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Rufus Jones</i>	<i>Books by Rufus Jones</i>	<i>Other events</i>
1863	17	Born 25 January in South China, Maine		
1873	27	Couch-bound for 9 months with injured foot/blood poisoning		
1878	30	Quaker boarding school (Oak Grove Seminary) in Vassalboro (ME)		
1879-82	32	Scholarship for Providence Friends School (PA). Science with Thomas Battey		
1880	33	Death of his mother, Mary Jones		
1882-1885	35	Haverford College. Influenced by Pliny Earle Chase. Read poetry and Emerson in the library. Editor-in-chief of the <i>Haverfordian</i>	• Graduation thesis <i>Mysticism and its Exponents</i> (unpublished)	
1885	44	Teaches Greek, Latin, German, surveying, astronomy, zoology at Oakwood Seminary (NY)		
1886	51	Travels in Europe, meeting Friends and going to lectures. Religious experience at Dieu-le-fit which convinced him to make the study of mystical religion his life's work.		
1887	57	Teaches at Providence Friends School Visits John Greenleaf Whittier		Richmond Declaration of Faith drawn up in Indiana (Uncle Eli and others visit Jones on their way home from the conference)

1888	58	Marries Sallie Coutant		
1889-93	60	Principal of Oak Grove Seminary Reads Royce's <i>Spirit of Modern Philosophy</i> and James' <i>Psychology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eli and Sybil Jones: Their Life and Work</i> (1889) 	W. James <i>Principles of Psychology</i> (1890)
1892	61	Birth of Lowell (named after the poet)		
1893	63	Managing Editor of <i>The Friends Review</i> (Gurneyite) Takes up a teaching post at Haverford, where he remains until 1934		
1894	67	Merges <i>The Friends Review</i> with <i>The Christian Worker</i> to form <i>The American Friend</i> . Edits the journal until 1912.		
1895	69			Manchester Conference – ideas carried forward by Jones
1897	72	Attends (and is impressed by) London Yearly Meeting and then travels in Italy and Switzerland. Meets John Rowntree and agrees to write history of Quakerism, with Jones concentrating on mysticism. Returns to find Sallie ill with TB		First summer school held in England
1899	75	Sallie dies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Practical Christianity</i> (editorials from <i>The American Friend</i>) 	Dean Inge give the Bampton lectures on Christian mysticism
1900	80	Jones and James Wood finalise a document known as 'Uniform Discipline' in an effort to unite American Quakers Jones becomes engaged to Wood's daughter Ellen, but she dies of typhoid a few months later		First American summer school (with Jones on the organizing committee and lecturing, p.81)
1900-01	85	MA at Harvard, studying under Thayer, Palmer and Munsterberg, auditing courses by Royce and Santayana, and forging a friendship with Peabody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Dynamic Faith</i> (history of Quakerism) (1900) 	1901&1902: William James delivers Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, published as <i>Varieties of Religious Experience</i>
1901	89	Takes up Chair of Philosophy at Haverford, created especially for him Speaks at Scarborough Summer School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Message of Quakerism</i> 	

1902	95 97	Marries Elizabeth Bartram (Cadbury family) Offered but turns down the post of principal at Woodbrooke	• <i>A Boy's Religion from Memory</i>	
1903	99	Son Lowell dies while Jones is en route to lecturing at the opening of Woodbrooke. Religious experience on boat	• (ed.) <i>Autobiography of George Fox</i>	Woodbrooke opens in Birmingham
1904	111	Daughter Mary Hoxie born	• <i>Social Law in the Spiritual World</i>	
1905	113 116	John Wilhelm Rowntree dies soon after arriving to see Jones. Jones travels to England to discuss the History with Joseph Rowntree. Funding provided by Rowntree Trust		
1906			• <i>The Double Search</i> • <i>Quakerism and the Simple Life</i>	
1907	123	Time in England studying at Oxford. Hears W. James giving Hibbert Lecture Gives the first Swarthmore Lecture		Dean Inge: <i>Personal Idealism and Mysticism</i>
1908			• <i>The Abundant Life</i> • <i>Quakerism: A Religion of Life</i>	Friedrich van Hugel: <i>Mystical Element in Religion</i>
1909	125		• <i>Studies in Mystical Religion</i>	
1910			• <i>Selections from the Writings of Clement of Alexandria</i>	Death of William James
1911	134	Studies in Europe researching mystics. Becomes friends with Rudolf Otto in Marburg	• <i>The Quakers in the American Colonies</i> • <i>Stories of Hebrew Heroes</i>	Evelyn Underhill: <i>Mysticism</i>
1912	143	Stops work for <i>The American Friend</i>		
1914	145 147	Editor of new journal <i>Present Day Papers</i> (PDP) Appointed to Board of Preachers at Harvard	• <i>Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries</i>	
1915?	147	Chairman of the Social Service Commission of the Interchurch Federation of Philadelphia (concerned with wages, housing, immigration)		
1915	152	Concussion, followed by a nervous breakdown		
1916	184	Elected chairman of the board at Bryn Mawr College	• <i>The Inner Life</i> (editorials from PDP)	
1917	159	Instrumental in setting up AFSC. Becomes Chairman and remains deeply involved for 30 years	• <i>St Paul the Hero</i>	

1918	165	Visits France to help with AFSC work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The World Within</i> 	
1919			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Religion as Reality, Life and Power</i> • <i>The Story of George Fox</i> 	
1920	185 186	Gives his second Swarthmore lecture Conference in London on Quaker response to war and peace AFSC involved in feeding Germans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Nature and Authority of Conscience</i> (Swarthmore Lecture) • <i>The Remnant</i> <i>A Service of Love in War Time</i> 	
1921	192		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Later Periods of Quakerism</i> (2 vols) 	
1922	200	Knocked over by automobile, followed by quiet, prolonged mystical experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Boy Jesus and his Companions</i> • <i>Spiritual Energies in Daily Life</i> (196) 	
1923	202 205	Sabbatical travels in Greece and Holy Land Meets von Hügel in England		
1924	206	Dean and Mrs Inge stay with the Joneses in Haverford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Church's Debt to Heretics</i> • <i>Fundamental Ends of Life</i> 	
1926	209 219	Visit to Asia (Japan, China, India) giving numerous lectures Meets Gandhi – incorporates some Indian thought from hereon (p. 223)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding the Trail of Life</i> • <i>Religion and Life</i> 	Read Whitehead's <i>Science and the Modern World</i>
1927			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Faith and Practice of the Quakers</i> • <i>New Studies in Mystical Religion</i> 	
1928	224	Retires from board of AFSC but made honorary chairman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The New Quest</i> 	
1929			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Trail of Life in College</i> 	
1930	236	Involved in the establishment of Pendle Hill (Quaker graduate school for religious and social studies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>George Fox, Seeker and Friend</i> • <i>Some Exponents of Mystical Religion</i> 	
1931	235		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pathways to the Reality of God</i> 	
1932	233	Takes part in International Missionary Council Conference in Canton. Deliberations published as the controversial <i>Re-thinking Missions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth</i> 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Preface to Christian Faith in a New Age</i> 	
1933			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Haverford College: A History and Interpretation</i> 	
1934	237	Retires from Haverford. Lectures at various venues in Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Trail of Life in the Middle Years</i> 	
1935	263	Chairman of AFSC Presiding clerk at Five Years Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Re-thinking Religious Liberalism</i> 	
1936	268	Jones' idea of a Wider Quaker Fellowship finally comes to fruition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Testimony of the Soul</i> (Ayer Lectures) 	
1937	269	Presides over Quaker World Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Some Problems of Life</i> (Cole Lectures) 	
1938	273 282	Visited Quakers and politicians in South Africa to talk about race Talks with the Gestapo in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Eternal Gospel</i> 	
1939			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Flowering of Mysticism</i> 	
1941			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Shepherd who missed the Manger</i> • <i>A Small-town Boy</i> • <i>Spirit in Man</i> • <i>The Vital Cell</i> (William Penn Lecture) 	
1942	297	Awarded the Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Medal		
1943			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>New Eyes for Invisibles</i> 	
1944	295	Resigns as chairman of AFSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Radiant Life</i> 	
1947	306	Nobel Peace Prize awarded to AFSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Luminous Trail</i> 	
1948	314	Dies June 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Call to What is Vital</i> 	

Appendix C

Selected extracts and transcripts of letters

The following letters, from the Rufus Jones Special Collection at Haverford, have been selected because of their relevance to a variety of issues surrounding *Social Law*. I have generally included only a page of the original letter, thus saving on space while giving something of the flavour of the style and tone of the letter and therefore, perhaps, an echo of the author's personality. In most cases, I have included my transcripts of the whole letter.

The letter from Jones to John Wilhelm Rowntree was chosen because it gives Jones' response to the reception of *Social Law*. That from Henry Newman (1895) is included because it describes the importance of the Manchester Conference. The letters from Newlin, Pritchard and Douglas give some insights into the fracture lines between evangelical and liberal Quakerism in the US pre-*Social Law*. The letters from Peabody, Henry Newman (1904) and his son George reflect the various responses to *Social Law* soon after its publication. That from Harris is included because of its warning about a Christless Quakerism. The brief notes from Gandhi and James are included because of their status as historically important figures. Finally, the letters from Underhill and Inge relate to Jones' views on mysticism.

Letters

From Rufus Jones to John Wilhelm Rowntree (26 December 1904). On the review of *Social Law* in *The London Friend*.

From Henry Newman (1895). On the Manchester Conference.

From Thomas Newlin (5 July 1896). On being called an infidel for embracing higher criticism.

From Esther Tuttle Pritchard (23 February 1900). The relationship between science and religion.

From J.W. Douglas (13 February 1903). Complaints about Jones' theology.

From Francis Peabody (12 December 1904). Comments on *Social Law*.

From Henry Newman (22 December 1904). The salvation of souls in *Social Law*.

From William James (20 November 1906). Arranging a meeting.

From George Newman (15 July 1907). The reaction to *Social Law* in Britain.

From Rendel Harris (12 May 1908). Warnings of a Christless Quakerism.

From Gandhi (28 May 1926). Invitation to visit.

From Evelyn Underhill (9 January 1928). On differing views of mystics.

From William Inge (12 June 1947.) On being a Quaker.

Jones' letter to John Wilhelm Rowntree (26 December 1904). On the reaction to Social Law in *The London Friend*.

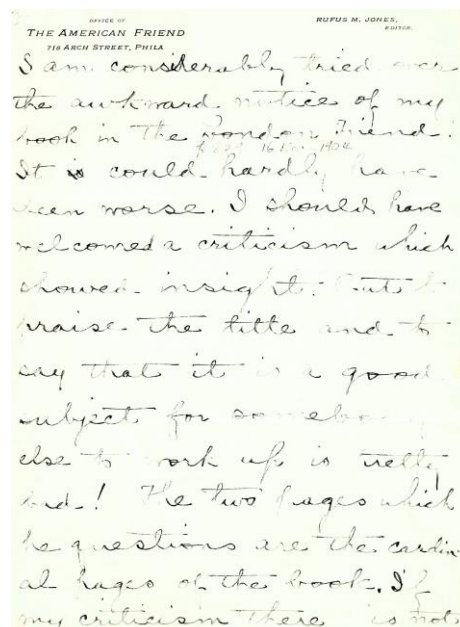
My dear John

The blessed season has brought me at last a few days of rest and I feel like a free man. I did not at all realize when I saw Ernest Grace's death reported that he was so bound up with thy own family. I knew that it was a severe loss for the Society but I did not know it touched thee and Connie so closely. Poor fellow, thee has assuredly been called to face many hard experiences this autumn, and I am sure thee has known how to be a comfort to Connie's sister in her dreadful bereavement. I wish I could in some way help such sufferers to find help and peace, for I know so well what it means to be staggered by an unexpected loss. There would be no use talking if there were not a heart's certainty of 'a more' than our temporal span [?]

.....

I am considerably tried over the awkward notice of my book in *The London Friend* [p.829 16 Dec. 1904]. It could hardly have been worse. I should have welcomed a criticism which showed insight. But to praise the title and to say that it is a good subject for someone else to work up is pretty bad! The two pages which he questions are the cardinal pages of the book. If my criticism there is not sound the entire argument of the book falls through. It is just here that the critic ought to meet me and show either that I have performed a service or that I have attacked the sacred citadel. If the Barclay idea of the 'seed' is correct Quakerism has no message for modern thinkers. It rests in the last resort on something supernatural in the same way as the Bible does for the old time evangelical teacher. I had hoped that my book might at least set Friends thinking, but I expect that is too much to hope.

Fortunately, it is welcomed outside the fold. The first edition is practically exhausted in six weeks and I have splendid letters from such men as Peabody, and [?] Hyde who are working in the same field. I did not mean to speak of it, but having just seen the *Friend* I am unduly stirred.....



OFFICE OF
THE AMERICAN FRIEND
715 ARCH STREET, PHILA.
RUFUS M. JONES, EDITOR.

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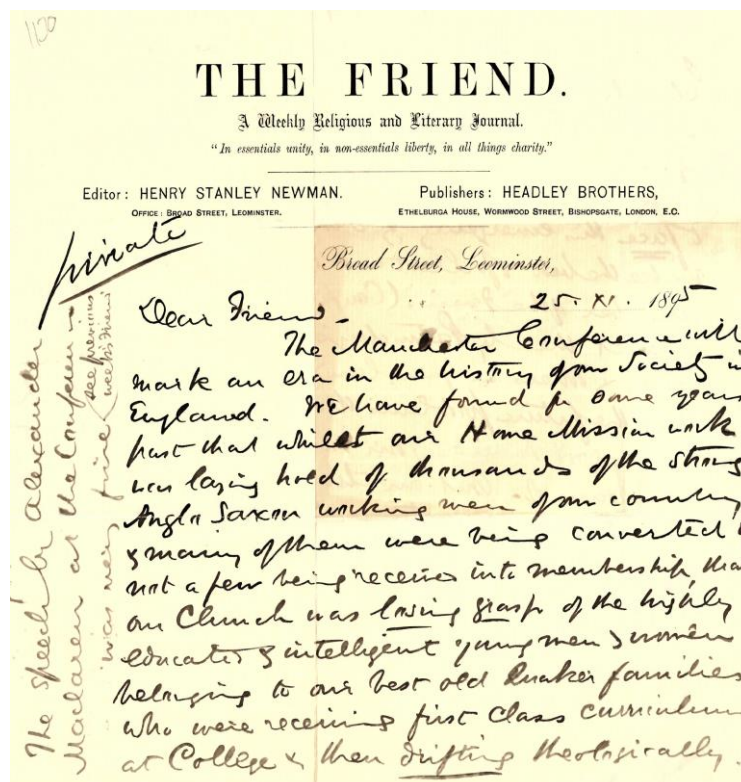
From Henry Newman (25 November 1895). On the Manchester Conference.

Dear Friend

The Manchester Conference will mark an era in the history of our Society in England. We have found for some years past that whilst our Home Mission work was laying hold of demands of the strong Anglo Saxon working men of our country and many of them were being converted & not a few being received into membership that our Church was losing grasp of the highly educated & intelligent young men and women belonging to our best old Quaker families who were receiving first class curriculums at College & then drifting theologically.

If our Society was thus to lose its best, a few years might settle our fate. Every Christian church must face modern criticism & modern scientific thought. It is not the slightest use ignoring it by burying our heads in the sand. This conference is the effort for the first time in our Society to face this emergency & I want thee to quietly make the best & fullest use thou can of the double number of the 'Friend' (Conference Number) that we sent thee by Saturday's mail. President Mills & others in your land have spoken to me about the future problems that confront us, which many good friends your side the stream do not yet dream of. But our church will have to face them to grow and to grow strong. The addresses by Rendel Harris & Thomas Hodgkin are golden. Thou wilt see my own remarks on page 771. A recent leader in the 'Friend' on Modern Criticism' also gives my views in another department of the subject, but it may be rather strong for some in America. Use thy own discretion & may God guide thee.

Thy mother editor Henry Stanley Newman



From Thomas Newlin (5 July 1896). On being called an infidel for embracing higher criticism.

My Dear Friend:

I never can tell you how much good your letter did me, which came to me yesterday. I sometimes get discouraged, but then I think of Christ's brave[?] words 'But for this cause came I unto this hour' and take courage. I have some strong friends and they are in a majority in this meeting. I have been called 'infidel', 'skeptic', 'unitarian', and all such. It has been very hard for me not to grow vindictive and bitter among all this, but I am thankful to say that I have been victorious. Our young people are a unit with me so far as I know. I have been very careful in my teaching. The whole trouble has been on account of Dr. Ladd's book 'What is the Bible?' Some think this is a dangerous question to ask. I wish the church could be made to see how cutting free from the old traditions makes the Bible a real book of life. I am not anchored to Moses, to Daniel or to Jonah, but to Jesus Christ. It would be amusing, if it were not so serious, to see what a ghost some people see in the term 'higher criticism', and at the same time have not the least conception what the term means. It is provoking to see a premium placed on ignorance as is often done in our church. But our faces are toward the light. We cannot go backward. I had a flattering offer to leave here, but I found no liberty except to hold the fort. The truth has made me free.

I have in some degree realized the difficult position in which you are placed in editing our church paper, and I think you are succeeding admirably. It will not do to cast pearls before swine. The truth must often be given in small doses. I think it is important that our colleges be on progressive spiritual lines. Here is our hope, and I am willing to labor on giving our young people larger views and broader fields. 'God wastes no history' is a helpful thought to me. Thanking you again for your kind words and with full assurance of best wishes for you & your work.

I am very truly, Thomas Newlin

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE,
PACIFIC COLLEGE,
1130
Newberg, Or., 7th Mo. 5th Day, 1896.

Refus M. Jones.
My Dear Friend:

I never can tell you how much good your letter did me, which came to me yesterday. I sometimes get discouraged, and then I think of Christ's brave words "But for this cause came I unto this hour." and take courage. I have some strong friends and they are in a majority in this meeting. I have been called "infidel," "skeptic," "unitarian," and all such. It has been very hard for me not to grow vindictive and bitter amid all this, but I am thankful to say that I have been victorious. Our young people are a unit with me so far as I know. I have been very careful in my teaching. The whole trouble

From Esther Tuttle Pritchard (23 February 1900). The relationship between science and religion.

My dear friend, Rufus M. Jones

Thy kind letter of the 21st came by the morning post. I am glad to know I did not oppress thee with my 'much speaking'. I scarcely know what to say about thy request to be allowed to make extracts. I would sooner trust[?] the body of the letter beginning where I say I should be glad if those who speak of 'doctrines' & 'pet-theories' would be more explicit, & ending just before the concluding paragraph begins. However if thee prefers a different course, go ahead, only please let me see the extracts before thee publishes them, as selections may not convey the whole thought & I should be sorry to have to explain. I hope I am not quite like the [?] school children for there is respectable authority to which I can refer and I believe that God will yet vindicate His own book & save it from the scissors of the scientists. Of course I desire to be preserved from the [?] that once said the earth is flat & it does not revolve, the revelation of science notwithstanding. But I am very slow to receive a theory that wipes out the record of creation & of man's first disobedience & of the promised seed, & makes Gen I-III children's legends. Besides, if the theory of evolution is accepted, I cannot see any place for an immortal nature in man unless one admits that the brute creation are immortal also. My own belief is that the creation seems passed like a panorama before the vision of the ? just as the future often used to unroll before the old prophets & the fact that the same order of creation is given in the Genesis account as has been discovered by science is also of might, as being hardly a happy guess. The story of Eden like that of the deluge may easily have passed down by tradition so that something like the Bible record and can be found in Chaldian inscriptions. However, whatever view we take, the situation is one of great gravity when we are told that the truths which God has owned for 19 centuries & attested by the 'everlasting sign' of our hearts are now making infidels and that we must teach differently if we would save the faith of the present-generation to Christianity. If the scientists would be content to stay on their own ground & not invade the domain of theology with their generalizations the case would be different. In place of that, the [?] who have had [?] conquests in the realm of grace & have [?] the most trophies from the field & who have as much demonstrated the truth of the word as the scientist has demonstrated his theories, are asked to [?] & let science leap into the saddle*. I think it is a common experience that controversy develops bad blood & a wrong spirit & I deprecate it on either side, & I have been pained to see the feeling that is being [?] by some of our evolutionists toward those who against the [?] movement with shame. It does not impress me as the spirit of the Master, and I trust we who deplore it shall not be betrayed into even a semblance of it ourselves. And yet I believe the church of Christ is entering an era of conflict in which he who has no sound hath need to 'sell his garment & buy one'. To be silent or to be neutral is to be disloyal to Christ & his truth.

For thyself in thy responsible position, I do sincerely & affectionately ? the wisdom and the grace that the cause demands. Certainly no Quaker editor has held the [?] for sixty years in times so perilous. And never has there been more need, it seems to me, for our people to be[?] for the anointing that [?], in their study of the word & the emphasis of this [?] the Friend will surely be [?] I trust the saints of God of the past and the present may often be

heard speaking through the columns of the Friend, witnessing, to what has been experimentally wrought in their hearts.

Thee says be 'good' to thee. Dear brother, am I not? It is in my heart to be so, & I say once more, the Lord bless thee according to the stress of present need and hold thy right hand & comfort thy heart.

Have I ever told thee I am keeping a MS memoir of my dear husband to leave as a legacy to the founders? I am now midway in the last chapter & faithfully ask knowledge the gracious enabling of my faithful Lord in a task that has been testing to both heart and brain.

Thine in Him

Esther Tuttle Pritchard

Margin note: Is it not as bad for science to fight Christianity as it is for Christianity to fight science since Christianity has demonstrated its truth for centuries, when science was in its swaddling clothes?

I have written at once to give answer about the selections. I am a lack of privacy in the question of my thoughts, but I put this all before my dear friend Rufus on June 21st. I believe one may sympathize with E.S.P.

1130

Esther Tuttle Pritchard,
Kokomo, Ind.

2, 23, 1900 189

My kind letter of the 21st came by the morning post. I am glad to know I did not oppress thee with my "much speaking." I scarcely know what to say about thy request to be allowed to make extracts. I would sooner trust the body of the letter beginning where I say I should be glad if those who speak of "doctrines" & "pot-theories" would be more explicit, & ending just before the concluding paragraph. However, if thou pursue a different course, go ahead, only please let me see the extracts before thou publish them, as selections may not convey the whole thought & I should be sorry to have to explain. I hope I am not quite like the self-satisfied school children for there is respectable authority to which I can refer, and I believe that God will yet vindicate His own word. ^{as said from the visions of the orientals} Of course I desire to be preserved from the overweening that once said the earth is flat & it does not round, the revelation of science notwithstanding. But I am only slow to receive a theory that wipes out the record of Creation & of man's first disobedience & of the promised Seed, & makes Gen I-III, Chaldean legends. Besides, if the theory of evolution is accepted, I cannot see any place for an immortal nature.

From J.W. Douglas (13 February 1903). Complaints about Jones' theology.

My Dear Friend R. M. Jones

I cannot understand why thou should encourage the reading of the Books suggested in thy editorial of recent date, if they were all labelled Poison, and to be read as samples of unsound and dangerous teachings I could understand the object. It seems very remarkable that every Book recommended strikes at the very foundation of the orthodox faith. The fruit of the teaching has been destructive to the faith of large numbers. The drift seems to be away from our childhood faith, and from the tender conscientious teaching of our sainted mothers. What a minister is to gain by the teachings of these Books that will enable him to better save and build up the believer in the true faith I cannot see. If we receive the teachings we shall teach evolution 'Drummond' we shall teach that there was no Garden of Eden & no personal Devil 'Fiske' & by the same author that the incarnation & atonement are among the outworn beliefs & that the long life of Voltaire? as worthily ended amid words and deeds of affectionate homage Washington Gluddin ends as? Fiske

These books are recommended without the least hint of their fundamental errors. Can it be possible that thou would have us go with these teachers in calling in question the History of the creation of Man, the temptation and fall, the personality of Satan, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Jesus Christ, and the Atonement.

It has been with great pain that I have read these authors, but greater much greater pain because our paper should so boldly recommend them. I encourage boldness & courage in leaving the teachings of our mothers [?]. My Dear Mother was a educated cultural woman & a teacher for many years, a woman full of faith and the Holy Ghost & wisdom. She taught me faithfully from the Holy Bible, taught me to pray and prayed over me in my cradle & under God was my spiritual mother as well as natural mother, now after reaching more than three score and ten I am immovably settled in my childhood faith, which I have lived and preached for more than 50 years.

These are stormy times, a new era dawns upon us, a new faith, a new theology is thrust upon us & will have its day, history is repeating itself, in fact new ethics, a [?] of worldliness is now very common in the churches which is in keeping with the lax faith, card playing, dancing, theatre going. Secret societies for both men and women. Clubs for women [Etc.?] All not only tolerated in the church but in many places encouraged & buildings filled up in connection with Church buildings to accommodate the world the flesh & the devil.

I am sure that a crop of immorality will result sooner or later from this laxity in faith. It is appearing in some places even now. I am thankful to believe that as of old more than 7000 have not bowed their knee nor kissed these idols. I have been quite sick for a month & suffered much, but am out again & hope to be in the [world?] soon again. I had been feeling quite comfortable about The American Friend of late & had so expressed myself to not a few, but I confess I was wonderfully shocked by the editorial I have alluded to. I am now clear what to look for next I cannot foresee, that our beloved [?] is drifting faster and faster from her ancient anchorage is true rejoicing many, & causing many great sorrow of heart. The Lord bless thee, thou we belong to two schools of faith. Thy friend and brother J.H. Douglas

Casita del Mar 1130
315 E. Ocean Ave.

Long Beach Cal 2/13 1903

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R. M. Jones.

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From Francis Peabody (12 December 1904). Comments on *Social Law*.

My dear Professor Jones:

Your kind letter and your book reached me this morning, and though I have not yet read your book straight through I have at once given myself the luxury of a half-hour with it, and with unusual appreciation and happiness. The main thesis for which you contend, of the 'conjuncture' of the lesser life and the larger, and the 'implications involved in normal consciousness', seems to me to state the foundation of any national religion or social hope. It gives me renewed courage in my own task to find how nearly your movement of thought coincides with my own. I must admit, that though the evidence of mysticism for many years seemed to me the most impressive, I have of late turned more confidently to the interpretation of moral life, and have found the implications of this consciousness involving a renewal of religious faith. There are many ways of approach to the great theme of which you write, and different minds must follow different paths, but of the general law which you reach and define there can be no question, either in validation or significance. I thank you truly for giving me an early opportunity to see what you have written and to express some sympathetic interest in it. It is a happiness to feel that you are in some sort one of our Harvard men. With kindest greetings,

Cordially yours,

Francis G. Peabody

1130

Dec. 12, 1904.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE MASS

My dear Professor Jones:

Your kind letter and your book reached me this morning, and though I have not yet read your book straight through I have at once given myself the luxury of a half-hour with it, and with unusual appreciation and happiness. The main thesis for which you contend, of the "conjuncture" of the lesser life and the larger, and the "implications involved in normal consciousness", seems to me to state

From Henry Newman (22 December 1904). The salvation of souls in *Social Law*.

Dear Friend

I felt a great attraction in the title of thy new book, although in reading it, much of it reflected the addresses we listened to with such delight & sympathy, at Woodbooke. There is a side current running through it that puzzled me in receiving it, & that was a line of thought that seemed to run up to the conclusion that somehow all souls are going ultimately to be saved. It seems manifest that many die in their sins not having partaken of the essential new birth. Is there some process in the next state of being by which after a period of suffering these receive the new life through Christ? Is this thy view? Is it that no soul of man is ultimately lost. Is it true that every soul has inherent immortality?

I do not mean that I think thou states this in thy book, but thou appears to leave the 'way open' for scholars to draw this possible conclusion. I think the teaching of Scripture is that immortality is only in God, only in Christ. Therefore if men die without having entered on the new life & higher life, the being 'born again', can they in the next state, receive life? There is a good deal in Scripture that (while recognising illimitable progress) seems to point to the direction the soul takes for death or for life, being determined here on earth & that the soul of the good grow better, & the souls of the evil grow worse in the future state of being. I avoided dealing with this point in my review because I thought it was better to let the main theme rest in the minds of the readers.

With much love and New Years greetings, Thine as ever

Henry S. Newman

1130
private
BUCKFIELD,
LEOMINSTER.
22/12/1904
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From William James (20 November 1906). Arranging a meeting.

I shall be glad to see you on Friday
the 30th. at 3.30 o'clock

Wm James

95 Irving St
Cambridge, Nov 20th. 1906

From George Newman (15 July 1907). The reaction to *Social Law* in Britain.

My Dear Friend

Thy more than kind letter was a great pleasure to receive. I got it just before Y.M. & ought to have acknowledged it long ago, but have been very busy over many things.

The Social Law book has been very widely read in England & is having a wholesome effect, of that I am sure: though people have been slow to speak about it, partly because they did not understand it [the message], & partly because they did not dare to trust it. The dualism[?] is still strong in English Christianity – but it is going!

I tried to get it out again at Y.M., & as the Friend did not fully report it I am printing it in the Frds Quarterly Examiner. Edmund Harvey & I had the writing of the [?] – I wonder what thy view of that is. It was a bit of an experiment but has been well received. O yes, we Quakers have been given something of a vision; if only, if only, we would proclaim it we might make the world just a bit nearer to a larger & truer thought of God. Now John Wilhelm has left us, some of us must buck up & do, even though it be only a little, something. The F.Q.E. does not quite give me the chance to keep hammering in – a quarterly is too infrequent, people forget the [?]. But my official work prevents me undertaking much more than the F.Q.E. Arnold Rowntree in his usual short cut says 'then drop the official work'! O, these cocoa makers the three families cd. run creation. Well, I must not waste thy time. This is just the friendly greeting of an affectionate disciple –

Thy friend in mischief

George Newman

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& do, even though it be only a
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not quite give me the chance to

From Rendel Harris (12 May 1908). The dangers of a Christless Quakerism.

Dear man,

We shall probably meet at Y.M. so I will not go into matters further at present. Thy book will be of great service: but the quotations must be verified & certain dangerous tendencies warned against. Thee will see it for thyself in going about. A Christless Quakerism will neither save itself nor the people.

Woodbrooke is flourishing & is the joy of my heart. We are often filled with 'wonder, love & praise'.

Thy friend

Rendel Harris

Christy and
Selby Oak.

May 12/08

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about. A Christless Quakerism
will neither save itself nor
the people.

From Gandhi (28 May 1926). Invitation to visit.

1130

The Ashram,
Sabarmati, 28-5-26.

Dear Friend,

I have your letter enclosing Dr. Holmes' letter. I shall be pleased to meet you whenever you come. However busy I may be, I know that I am by no means so much ~~pushed~~ as people in America are. I have therefore always time to meet friends like you.

Yours sincerely,
M.K. Gandhi

From Evelyn Underhill (9 January 1928). On differing views of mystics.

My dear Rufus Jones

It was a real joy to have your letter and greetings; for I feel it is a special happiness to have your friendship, & value keeping in touch. I am so glad you were not displeased at anything I said about 'New Studies'. We do seem to see the saints from different angles – but they remain the same Saints; which after all is the main thing isn't it? Duttons are publishing my new book 'Man & the Supernatural' in America shortly & I shall be telling them to send you a copy. Though I don't think you will agree with my philosophy, I hope you will find things in it that you like. It like yours is dedicated to Baron von Hügel's memory & really owes to his teaching any value it might possess.

I wonder whether you have yet seen Bremond's 'Priere et Poisie'. If not, do please get it. I think you will like it vy much. Algar Thorold has just brought out an English translation. It's a vy deep and subtle little book.

With all good wishes for your work & happiness in the New Year.

Always your friend

Evelyn Stuart Moore

1130
Evelyn Underhill
50, CAMPDEN HILL SQUARE,
1 Jan 9 1928 W. 8.
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From William Inge (12 June 1947). On being a Quaker.

My dear Mr Jones

Many thanks for your letter. But your kind gift of 'the Luminous Trail' has not arrived. I should like to see it very much.

I have in the press a book on 'Mysticism in Religion' – philosophical and not a study of psychopathology. Like Huxley and many others I have been captivated by Indian thought as expounded by Radhakrishnan and others. Just when we are losing India we are finding out how much we might have learned from them. My book is terribly senile – I have just entered my 88th year – but it takes my mind off public affairs, which as far as we are concerned are almost desperate. Lord Beaverbrook said to me, 'We shall soon be very sorry that we went into this war'. I said 'I am very sorry now'

I often think of our delightful visit to Haverford and of your kindness to us. Bernard Shaw told me that I am a Quaker, and I believe I am.

Yours very sincerely W.R. Inge

1130

Brightwell Manor
Wallingford
June 12
1947?

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